GENNA SOSONKO
ALEKHINE'S PARIS YEARS

KORTCHNOI-SPASSKY
REUNION IN ELISTA

BORIS GELFAND (41)
CLAIMS WORLD CUP

NEW IN CHESS

STAR ANALYSIS:

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Gelfand
Svidler
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Polgar
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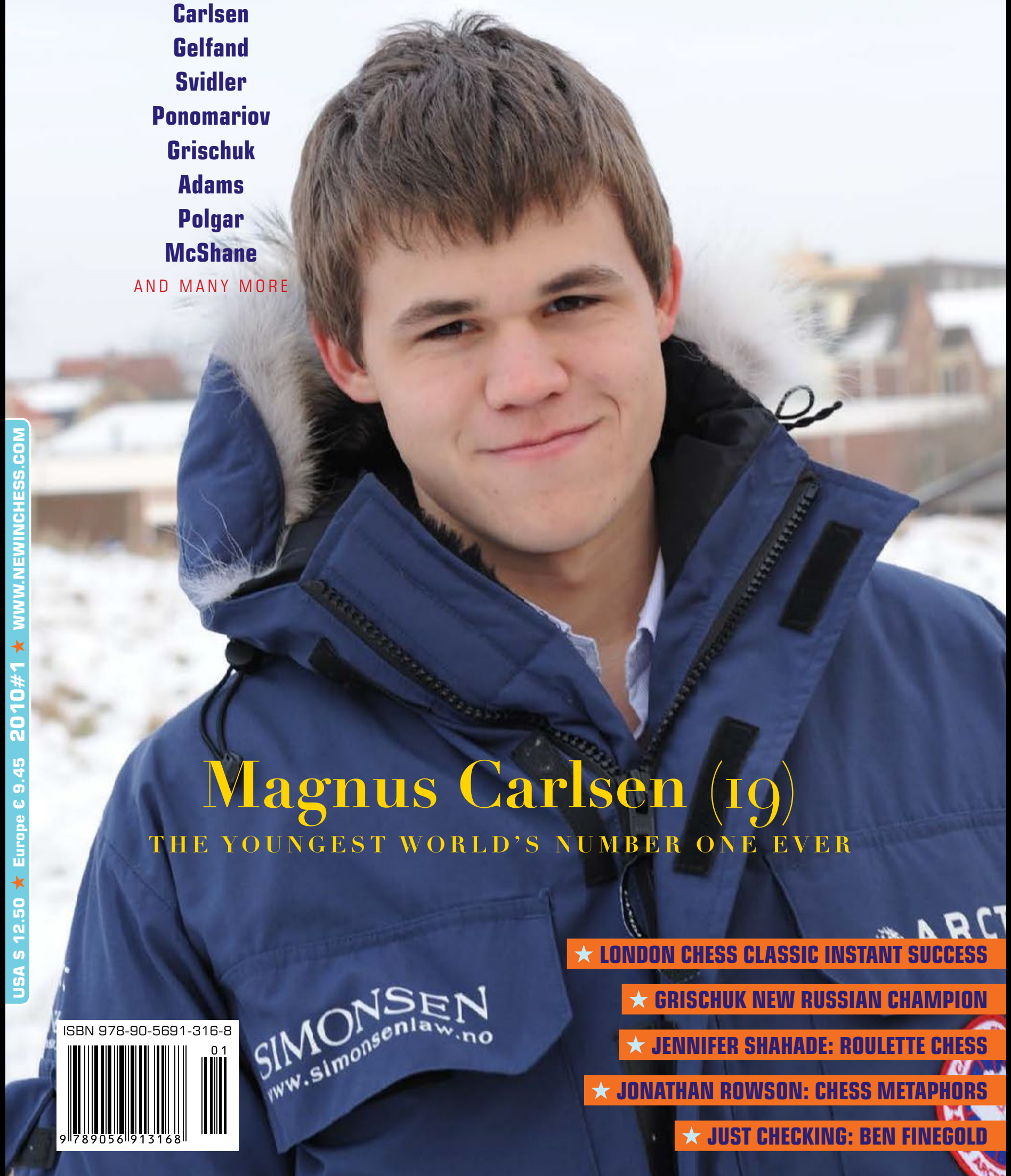
AND MANY MORE



Magnus Carlsen (19)

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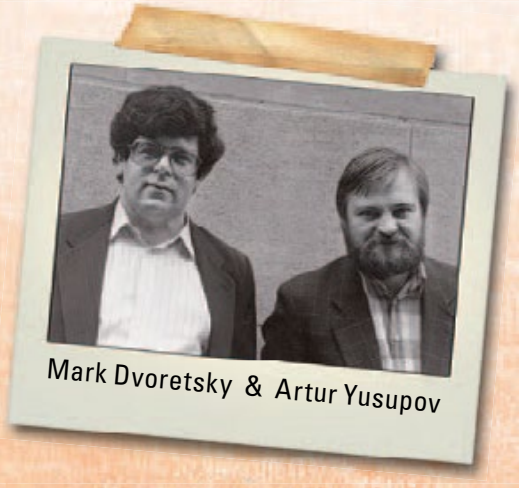

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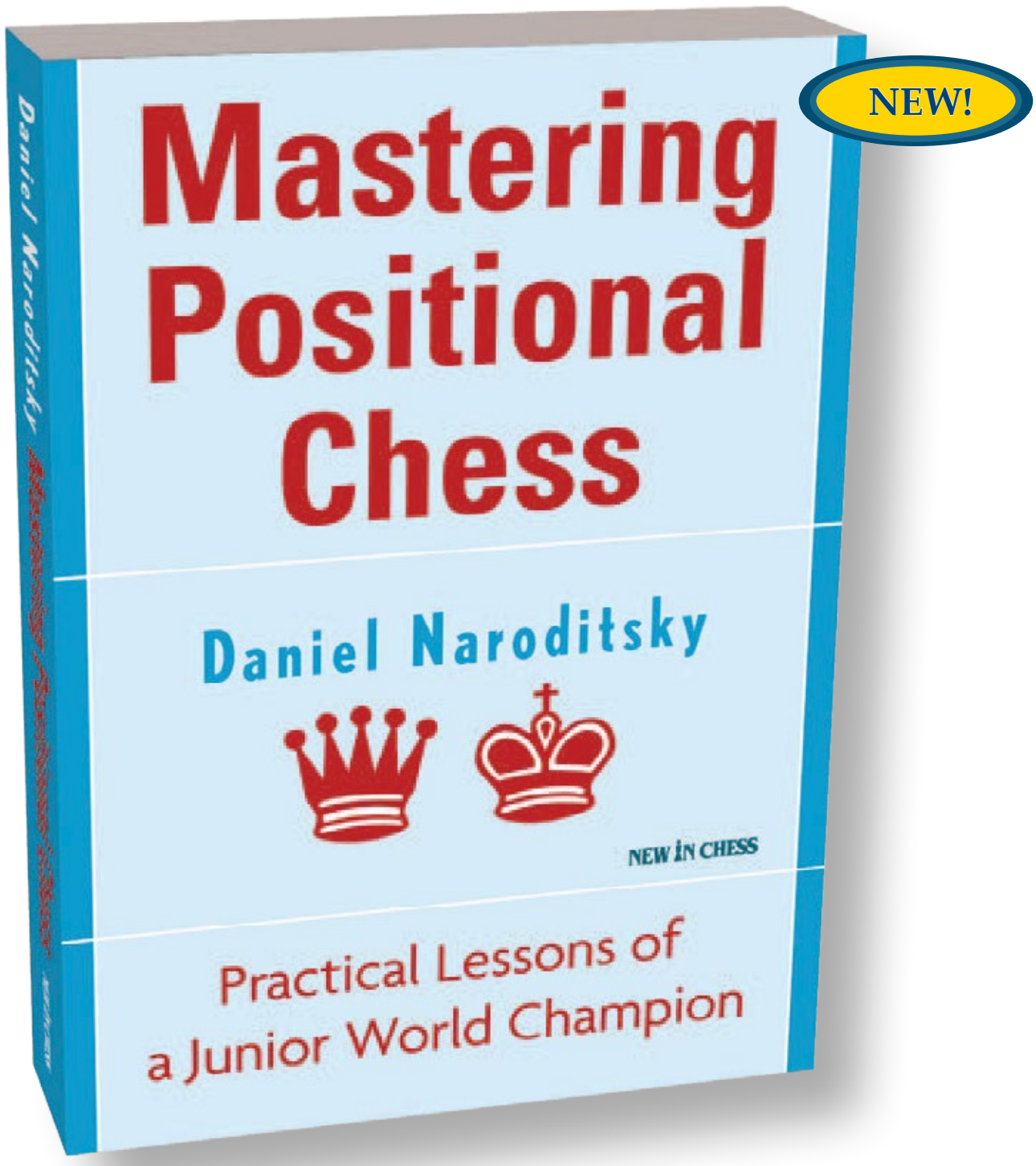

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2010 Issue 1

NEW IN CHESS

PUBLISHER: Allard Hoogland **EDITORS-IN-CHIEF**: Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam, Jan Timman

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8 Carlsen Claims London Chess Classic
'One big dream,' tournament director Malcolm Pein called the London Chess Classic, and everyone present agreed. After all, the birth of a major new chess event in a city that is known to fans worldwide is a rarity these days. The London Chess Classic. Magnus Carlsen, the Norwegian top-seed, also saw a dream come true. Looking for adventure in all of his games, the public's favourite steered straight for the €25,000 first prize and secured top spot in the January 2010 world rankings. 'I am not claiming now that I am much better than all of the others, but I think that the ratings do mean something. When people are speaking about the best player in the world, it will be hard to overlook me that easily.'

30 A Country for Old Men
The World Cup returned to Khanty-Mansiysk, Siberia, where this time the thermometer hovered between -30 C and -40 C. The format is not everybody's cup of tea, but our reporter, Misha Savinov, has no doubts. 'It took 480 games to determine the winner, and the winner had to play 25 games in less than two weeks. I believe the Khanty-Mansiysk tournament and its heroes deserve a lot of love from the chess world. And its winner Boris Gelfand should receive the highest acclaim. He won a marathon. Think about it.'

60 Roulette Chess
If you think Fischerandom is random, you may wonder how random Roulette Chess, developed by artist Larry List and WGM Jennifer Shahade, is. Perhaps you should see it as art.

64 Alexander Grischuk Russian Champion
Alexander Grischuk crowned a successful year that already included victories in Linares and Mainz with a sweeping victory at the 2009 Russian Super Final. Displaying unbelievably confident and high-quality play the Muscovite deservedly took his first national title. In the five years of its existence the Super Final has developed its own traditions (one of them is that no one has yet managed to win it twice) and who could be a better guide to its unwritten rules and peculiarities than Mark Glukhovsky, the editor-in-chief of Russia's most revered chess periodical '64'.

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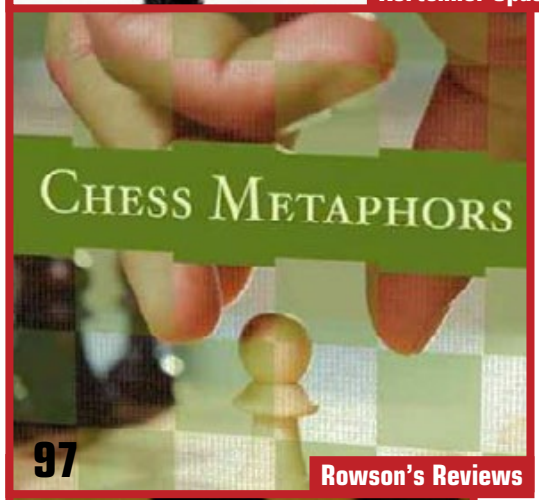

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COVER PHOTO
Magnus Carlsen: New In Chess

Where Are You Going?

The start of a new year is typically a moment of promises, good intentions and other plans to upgrade our lives. Chess players tell themselves to be more careful about their pawns and pieces, to do better against that weaker rival at the club and to try and close that ever widening gap between their Elo and that of Magnus Carlsen. This latter challenge will not be an easy one. In the January 1, 2010

NEW IN CHESS

Magnus Carlsen's finest result in 2009 was his stunning win in Nanjing where he pocketed 29 rating points.

FIDE world rankings 19-year-old Carlsen climbed to 2810, which not only makes him the strongest junior around but also the strongest player in the world overall. And, before we forget, the youngest ever to stand on the summit. The former prodigy tops previous number one Veselin Topalov by 5 points and World Champion Vishy Anand by 20 points. Optimists (fans?) think that he may be heading for 2900 (his coach Kasparov peaked at 2851 in 1999), but for the moment that seems to be a tall order, even for a Norwegian.

Carlsen ended the year on a high note with his win in the London Classic and, not surprisingly, he was showered with rewards in his country. The readers of various tabloids voted him Sportsman of the Year and in the quality newspaper *VG* he was even named Person of the Year. The current top 20 of the FIDE rankings looks as follows: 1. Carlsen, 2810; 2. Topalov, 2805; 3. Anand, 2790; 4. Kramnik, 2788; 5. Aronian, 2781; 6. Gelfand, 2761; 7. Gashimov, 2759; 8. Ivanchuk, 2749; 9. Wang Yue, 2749; 10. Svidler, 2744; 11. Mamedyarov, 2741; 12. Leko, 2739; 13. Ponomariov, 2737; 14. Eljanov, 2736; 15. Grischuk, 2736; 16. Radjabov, 2733; 17. Morozevich, 2732; 18. Vachier-Lagrave, 2730; 19. Yakovenko, 2730; 20. Shirov, 2723.

What's in a Name?

Chess players with stocks and shares may use this year after the global financial crisis (let's cautiously assume that the worst is behind us) as an opportunity to change tack in their portfolio. A book that might be interesting to them is *The Naked Portfolio Manager, Why Rules Trump Reason on Wall Street*. Now, why would we at the Café bother you with a book like that? Well, to begin with the name of the author is Robert J. Fischer! But that's not all. Chess played a huge role in the development of the book. One chapter is all about chess, and Fischer (unfortunately J. is for Joseph, and his friends call him Bob) told us that his studies with International Grandmaster Greg Kaidanov helped him to understand his own thinking patterns and those of others both at and away from the chess board. Now we are used to adulatory analogies between bright strategies and brilliant ideas in whatever field and the thought processes of chess players, but interestingly, that's not Fischer's point. On the contrary, he argues, for instance, that even 'the greatest chess player of all time' (the other Robert J. Fischer) was not always led by pure reason and let himself be blinded by emotions, biases and prejudices. Such as his materialistic penchant, the result of his obsession with money, that caused him to snatch a poisoned pawn on move 29 of his first game against Spassky in their 1972 world championship match in Reykjavik. Or he refers to a note of Bobby Fischer to a move in a game against Tal in 1961, where he admits that instead of a stronger continuation he just took a pawn for materialistic reasons.

Robert J. Fischer, pity the middle name is Joseph.

There are several more examples of chess players getting emotional or otherwise forgetting about reason in the book, and the gist is that if even these great thinkers cannot control themselves in tense situations, what can we expect of ordinary mortals when looking after their portfolios? You've guessed right. There are rules that you should simply stick to without becoming emotional, and those rules are written down in Bob's book.

Attack Remains the Best Defence

One of the items that could not fail to catch the eye in the bookstand of the London Chess Classic, was the new issue of *Kingpin*, the satirical chess magazine edited by Jonathan Manley that appears at unpredict-

able intervals. This is number 40, dated 'Autumn 2009', number 39 appeared in February of last year. Amid contributions such as Jeremy Silman's 'Dating Advice from a Chess Player' and Gary Lane's 'Agony Column', the centrepiece is a 13-page anonymous article about the Brain Games Scandal, and more precisely 'Grandfraudster' Raymond Keene's role in it. Those who also read an earlier treatise on Keene in *Kingpin* will understand that the article has not been written to praise him. For those who would like to read what *Kingpin* has to say we gladly refer to www.kingpinchess.net.

SEAN MARSH

As his nickname predicted, Raymond 'The Penguin' Keene kept his cool.

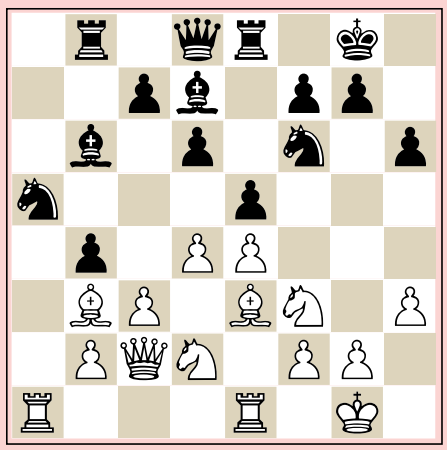
But didn't Keene visit the London Chess Classic? And wasn't he embarrassed by this new full frontal attack? Perhaps he was, but he certainly didn't show it. Immediately on his arrival at the Olympia he went straight for the small stack of Kingpin issues and started signing them!

Good Old Traditions

As usual, the new year was inaugurated by several New Year tournaments, the longest traditions being Hastings (85th edition), Reggio Emilia (52nd edition) and the Rilton Cup in Stockholm (39th edition). Both Hastings (Istratescu, Edouard, Howell and Hebden) and Stockholm (Rozentalis, Wojtaszek, Ponkratov, McShane and Lysyj) ended in massive ties for first place. In Reggio, Gata Kamsky caught up with Zoltan Almasi in the last round to take the title on tie-break.

RL 12.6 – C78
Gata Kamsky
Zoltan Almasi
Reggio Emilia 2010 (9)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 b5 6.♗b3 ♗c5 7.c3 d6 8.a4 ♖b8 9.axb5 axb5 10.d4 ♗b6 11.h3 Kamsky is not interested in a theoretical discussion after the popular 11.♘a3. **11...0-0 12.♖e1 h6 13.♗e3 ♗d7 14.♘bd2 ♖e8 15.♕b1 b4 16.♕c2 ♘a5**



A provoking sortie, almost inviting White to sacrifice an exchange. **17.♖xa5!** And why not? The pressure against e5 (and f7) should give White sufficient compensation. **17...♗xa5 18.dxe5 dxe5 19.♘c4 ♖b5** Black would rather give back the exchange than part with the e-pawn. **20.♗a4 b3 21.♕d1 ♕b8 22.♘fd2 ♗e6 23.♕a1 ♖c8** This leaves White with a considerable advantage. Better was 23...♗xc4 24.♘xc4 ♘xe4 25.♖d1 ♗xc3!? 26.bxc3 ♕b7, and Black should probably be OK. **24.♗a7** A safe way to get an endgame with an extra pawn was 24.♗xb5 ♕xb5 25.♕xa5 ♗xc4 26.♕xb5 ♗xb5 27.♖a1, and either the pawn on e5 or that on b3 will soon drop

Gata Kamsky defeated top-seed Zoltan Almasi with remarkable ease.

off. **24...♕xa7 25.♗xb5 ♗b6?** This loses a pawn. He should have played his rook to b8 or a8. **26.♕xa7 ♗xa7 27.♘xe5 ♖d8 28.♘df3 ♗b6 29.♗c4 ♖e8 30.♘d2 ♗c5 31.♗xe6 ♖xe6 32.♘ec4 ♗f8 33.e5 ♘d5 34.♘xb3** The rest is not too difficult. **34...♘f4 35.h4 ♖a6 36.♖a1 ♖c6 37.♖a4 ♘d3 38.♘d4 ♖c5 39.e6** The e-pawn decides the issue. **39...♗e7 40.♖a8+ ♔h7 41.♖e8** Black resigned.

COLOPHON

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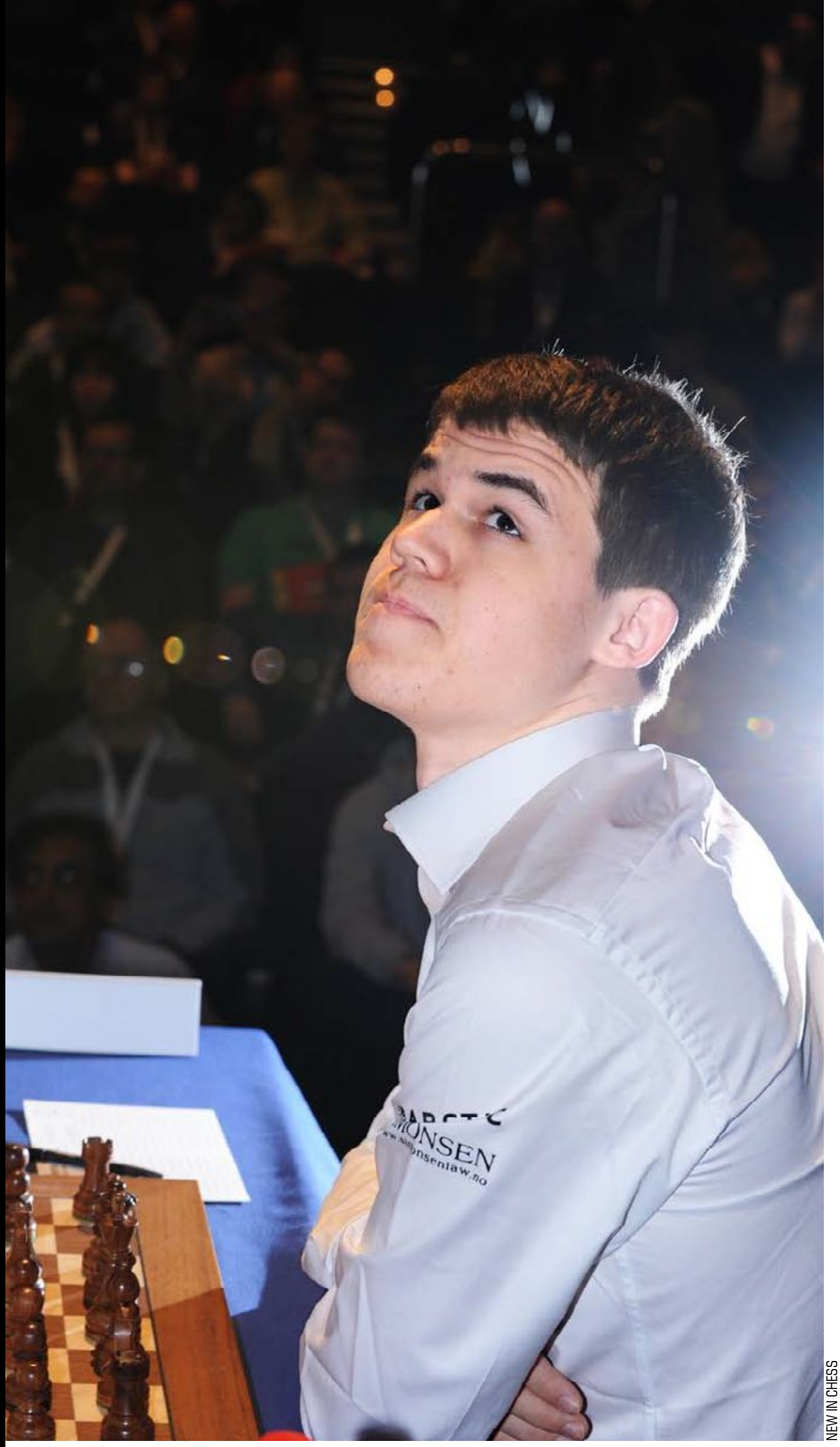
Magnus Carlsen claims inaugural London Chess Classic

'One big dream,' tournament director Malcolm Pein called the London Chess Classic, and everyone present agreed. After all, the birth of a major new chess event in a city that is known to fans worldwide is a rarity these days. The London Chess Classic, a brief but intense eight-player round-robin with a €100,000 prize-fund, pitted England's four favourite chess sons against four foreign stars from Russia, the United States, China and Norway. Magnus Carlsen, the Norwegian top-seed, also saw a dream come true. Looking for adventure in all of his games, the public's favourite steered straight for the €25,000 first prize and secured top spot in the January 2010 world rankings. 'I am not claiming now that I am much better than all of the others, but I think that the ratings do mean something. When people are speaking about the best player in the world, it will be hard to overlook me that easily.'

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam

If ever a study will be written about the origins of major chess events, the author should dedicate a special chapter to the story of how the London Chess Classic came about. Or are there other tournaments that started with the tournament director (not in that capacity yet) being given to a prospective sponsor as a present? Because that's exactly what happened in London. Two years ago a successful investment banker working in the City, received chess lessons by Malcolm Pein for his birthday. Pein, who used to be very active in this field, hardly teaches chess these days, due to his business activities at the London Chess Centre, but for this special client he decided to make an exception. With good reason, as he soon found out. The man was talented. 'It was a bit like Top Gear, this television program about cars, where a car goes naught to 60 in four seconds. This chap went from 100 to 1800 in about five minutes, he just learned very fast.' What was more, he was enjoying it. During their meetings Pein also started to explain to him about the state of chess in Britain, and then one day he had a brilliant idea. 'I said, why don't we go to the chess world championship in Bonn?' And that's what they did, in the company of friends of his rapidly learning chess pupil, all of whom worked in the City, too. Pein: 'We were lucky, because the match was run by UEP, which meant that it was organized just impeccably, everything was brilliant.' Pein's pupil highly enjoyed the outing, and on the way back, in his private plane, he said that one day he'd like to do something like that too. And his friends agreed. So did Pein, but thinking that before you can run you first need to know how to walk, he cautiously suggested that it might be a good idea to start with a properly run tournament first. Which is how the London Chess Classic was born.

The sponsors, who preferred to remain in the background, didn't want a brand on the tournament and gave all the money themselves. And they wanted to create a charity. As Pein explained: 'The idea is to get chess into every school in Britain. We are not running all these tournaments just to have some nice tournaments. Excellence is a tool to generate mass participation. That's the strategy



NEW IN CHESS

Despite the presence of four English grandmasters, it seems safe to say that Magnus Carlsen was the public's favourite at the Olympia Conference Centre.

in one sentence. A lot of these people are not necessarily chess players, but they understand the value of chess. And they've got experience of charities in other areas, like cricket for example, and we want to use those methods in chess.'

The result was an expertly organized tournament where everyone seemed to be happy. In the auditorium of the Olympia Conference Centre, which has 490 seats, the visitors could watch the players in action. In the commentary room, where there was space for some 150 fans if some of them would stand or sit on the floor (as they did), grandmasters explained the games and the players joined them immediately after their game had finished. In the foyer you could play a friendly game or listen to other GMs explaining the moves in terms understandable for a broad audience. And apart from all this, there was an open tournament, blitz tournaments and simuls by guest of honour Viktor Kortchnoi (who, when he was not playing simuls, entertained the guests in the VIP room with his comments on the games). Even the 'Chess Doctor' was around, a group of expert players taking turns to solve basic chess problems that 'patients' came up with.

On the busiest days, around a thousand people came to the Olympia to enjoy chess. Admission for juniors was free, adults paid £10 per day or £50 for a season ticket. On the first Saturday they even had to turn away people because the place was full, a heartwarming thought if you considered the photos of the drearily empty playing hall of the World Cup in Khanty-Mansiysk that was taking place at the same time.

Despite the presence of four English grandmasters, it seems safe to say that Magnus Carlsen was the public's favourite. Whenever he emerged from the playing hall, the queues for autographs were the longest and the commentary room would be packed when he entered to show his game. An amusing situation occurred when in the penultimate round the games Kramnik-Short and

Carlsen-Adams ended almost at the same time, causing some congestion in the commentary room. As Kramnik and Short walked in first, a flushed Pein told them not to take too much time explaining their game, as he had 'some five and a half thousand Elo points waiting'. To which a slightly puzzled Kramnik remarked to Short, 'I thought we also had quite an amount of Elo points between us.'

The tournament started auspiciously for Carlsen when at the opening ceremony he drew number one. Apparently, he has a knack for picking number one, as this was the third time in a row after Nanjing and Moscow. In London he had to choose from eight white pawns with numbers one to eight attached to the bottom. And he didn't just take potluck when he went straight for the c2 pawn: 'I had some theory that number one had to be on a white square. I thought that a2 was just too bizarre, e2 too obvious, g2 too, well, too far to walk, so it had to be c2.' Right, who can argue against that!

Picking number one was a bull's eye, as it not only gave him White in the first round against his main rival Kramnik, but also four Whites and only three Blacks, a considerable advantage in such a short tournament. Indeed, the game against Kramnik proved to be the decisive game of the tournament. In an unconventional position in which it was hard to come up with an assessment, Carlsen finally managed to consolidate his forces with the bishop pair and an extra pawn and converted this advantage into a win. Given the rivalry between Kramnik and Carlsen's coach Kasparov and bearing in mind attempts by Kramnik in recent statements to temper the hype around the Norwegian's strength, Carlsen was obviously delighted with this important win.

Kramnik tried not to take the defeat too hard. 'I was not particularly unhappy after this game. He is a player of the level of Anand or Topalov, you can lose as Black. I was playing pretty sharply, looking for a complicated game. At some point I made some miscalculation and it was such a tense position that this simply ended the game, there was no way to escape. Against a very strong opponent this can happen. It was probably time to lose a game, as I hadn't lost a game for a year.'

be not too unhappy with the outcome: 'I came here just to play. After all, you shouldn't forget that I still have to qualify for the world championship, so I had to be a bit careful not to show too bad a result. My main objective was not to win the tournament, but basically just to play well, enjoy chess and show a decent result, which I achieved.'

Third place was shared by David Howell and Michael Adams,

JOHN SAUNDERS

Relying on 'iron logic' Magnus Carlsen once again drew number 1. His main rival Vladimir Kramnik picked up '8', which meant black against Carlsen in Round 1, and only three white games.

However, Kramnik remained critical of the division of colours. 'I am not looking for an excuse, because I told this to the organizers before, but in this format you should make an even amount of rounds. In seven rounds, having an extra White is almost like a half-point advantage. The shorter the tournament, the bigger the difference. In this tournament it proved to be decisive.'

Still, Kramnik continued undeterred, scoring plus-three in his remaining six games at the expense of Ni Hua, McShane and Short, to finish in clear second place. Looking back he tended to

both of whom, after six draws, managed to win their last games, against Ni Hua and Luke McShane respectively. Officially, Howell was declared third-prize winner, as he posted his win with the black pieces. For the 19-year-old David Howell the LCC was nothing less than sensational, and he readily admitted that before the tournament he had been very very nervous. He even slept badly and kept waking up in the middle of the night with bad dreams. 'One night I woke up thinking I had played the King's Gambit against Carlsen. That was a horrible nightmare.' And he felt that

preparing and playing day in day out was tough. 'Sitting on the stage in front of hundreds of people saps nervous energy. I've never experienced anything like it before. Towards the end I was able to relax a bit and felt more comfortable, but at the beginning I felt that everybody would be judging every move I made.' Looking back, he was obviously delighted, although he may not yet have seen enough to make up his mind about his future. For a while he has been playing chess semi-professionally, not knowing whether he should follow his friends, who have all gone to university, or take the plunge and become a chess pro. What he will certainly remember from the London tournament is his miraculous escape against Carlsen. 'I played horribly at the beginning and made at least two big blunders, but I managed to fight on.' How he managed to save his skin England's youngest GM explains in his notes to that game below.

Michael Adams came to London hoping to end a bad period in his career that had lasted for about the last 14 months. Rather than seeing the event as a battle against his English colleagues he was interested to play against Kramnik and Carlsen. 'At the European Team Championship in Novi Sad I played a couple of big guys, Topalov and Radjabov, and I got absolutely wiped out in both games. So it was a bit of a concern. I wanted at least to show that I can play normal games with these guys.' Having four Blacks he was not too unhappy with his plus-one score. He should have won the endgame against Nakamura, but on the other hand he knew that he had been lucky to draw against Short. The games against Kramnik and Carlsen he both drew. In the first one Adams calmly demonstrated that White's extra pawn was of no significance thanks to opposite-coloured bishops. In the second game he played very well, and even got a chance to play for a win. In his notes to this game Adams shows that he missed that chance. 'It was a snap opportunity, I didn't really see the idea at all. I think he didn't see it during the game either. So, not so much to complain about.'

Luke McShane finished in fifth place. With the LCC football scoring system of three points for a win, one for a draw and zero for a loss, his two wins and one draw were worth more than Ni Hua's one win and three draws. Curiously, both the Englishman and the Chinaman finished ahead of Hikaru Nakamura, whose six draws and one loss would have thrown in more weight in the classical scoring system.

'One night I woke up thinking I had played the King's Gambit against Carlsen. That was a horrible nightmare.'

McShane had the most decisive results, two wins and four losses, which he understandably called a mixed blessing. Particularly his last-round loss after tumultuous complications against Adams hurt. 'It was just a complete mess, but he came out of it a bit better than I did. At some point I had the feeling that I had to go for that mess and it looked reasonably promising. But sometimes your numbers don't come up.'

He suffered his first loss against Carlsen in Round 2, a win that put the Norwegian firmly in the lead. 'He fully deserved to win that one. I defended very well at certain moments, but it wasn't quite sufficient. He got some sort of positional edge and then I got squeezed.' A conclusion that Carlsen didn't contradict: 'It was a very slow kind of position, neither side has much to do. I was just trying to keep the tension, trying to prevent his plans. That was even more important than coming up with one of my own, because I believed I had a long-term structural advantage.'

On the other hand, McShane's two wins were most gratifying for the Englishman, who right now isn't quite sure if he should continue working for a bank, as he has done for the past two years, or play more chess again. As he put it himself when asked about his position in the LCC field: 'I am not an amateur, but less professional than the others.' McShane's first win was against Short in Round 1 and lasted 163 moves (followed by 61 moves against Carlsen the next day). 'I was very happy with my game against Nigel for obvious reasons. I guess it's the longest game I've ever played for one thing, and actually I played with a lot of determination. I had such a very very slight advantage that it took a lot of effort to push it into something more meaningful.'

But his biggest splash was his win against Nakamura, for which he was awarded the Best Game Prize. 'He has a reputation as a very exciting player and we got into a very exciting position and I was able to more than hold my own. That was quite pleasing.' Even more pleasing was that the Best Game Prize was worth a whopping €10,000, quite an unusually large amount for a prize that was not really specified in the tournament rules, leaving some of

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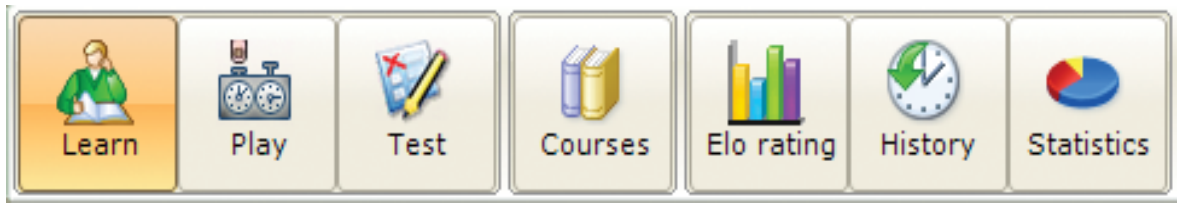

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the other players with mixed feelings. And it must be said that notwithstanding the merits of McShane's effort against Nakamura, there were certainly other candidates as well.

Hikaru Nakamura uncharacteristically drew six games and didn't win any. But he tried to look at his result realistically. 'It was a short tournament and I blew my chance. If I'd won my first game (against Ni Hua) there's no saying what would have happened. The whole strategy was to play solidly against Magnus and against Vladimir, and I did that part quite well. But the problem is that when I played the others, they just played very solidly.'

Having recently won a brief blitz match against Carlsen in Norway, Nakamura felt that in their game 'there definitely was some added motivation for both of us. And it was a psychological victory in the sense that I was definitely better.' Not so long ago Nakamura stated that he believed he had managed to 'get into his head a little bit' and he still thinks this is the case. Carlsen himself shrugged the suggestion off in London: 'He's a very talented player and I am certainly not happy about my games against him. But I don't think he is in my head. I think that at least to some degree the differences in results speak for themselves.'

Although according to the classical scoring system he assembled just as many points as McShane, Nigel Short finished in bottom place, as he failed to win a game. Not surprisingly he was critical of the system used, as, we should add immediately, were most of the players. 'I don't have a problem with the Sofia rules. Why should chess players just agree draws? It's usually out of mutual fear. If we manage to make it clear to the last person in the room why a game is drawn we've made great progress. Chess is inherently a difficult game and that is part of the beauty of it, but it does have these problems of reaching out to the average player. However, the one thing I didn't like here is the three points for a win, I think that is just stupid. A draw is just a natural result in chess and you're tampering with the rules of the game by doing this.' Which sounds like a logical conclusion. Why, if you are already stopping the players from making short draws with the Sofia rules, should you once again try to incite them with an unnatural scoring system?

NEW IN CHESS

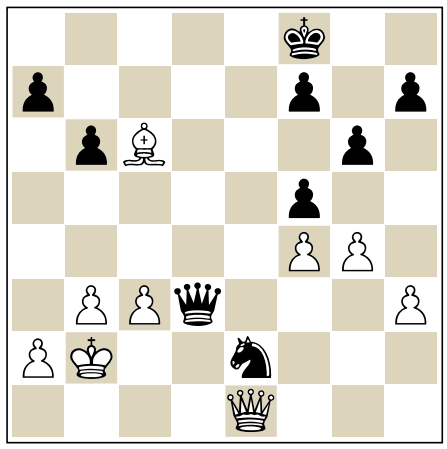
In every nook and cranny of the Olympia Conference Centre chess could be enjoyed. GM Chris Ward was one of the commentators in the Foyer.

Short came to London with a mix of anticipation and trepidation. 'My performance was disappointing. I was quite nervous for the event, there was extra pressure playing in front of your own home-crowd, which I hadn't done in many years. Furthermore, I am not used to playing very strong players these days. And the hierarchy of English chess is not at the back of my mind, but somewhere in the middle. There is that rivalry between me and Mickey. For a very long time he has been clearly number one in England. I have been playing very well in the last couple of years and he has been slipping. Now on the January list I am two points ahead of him, which Mr Elo would say is statistically insignificant, but psychologically it's still very nice.'

However, all in all he wasn't too disappointed. 'I don't think I played that badly, but my view is that quite often there is not a big difference between playing well and playing badly, in that quite often 90 percent of your moves are the same. The difference is just those small moments where you miss your chances. Plus having four Blacks in seven rounds makes a difference.'

Short's last opponent, with the white pieces, was Magnus Carlsen. Perhaps in another event a fightless draw would have been an option, as this would have guaranteed the Norwegian unshared first place, but with the Sofia rules (and Carlsen behind the black pieces) no such thing was

going to happen. Carlsen took considerable risks, but was paid for his courage and reached a favourable position. According to Short (and some of the commentators), he would have been lost if in the following position:



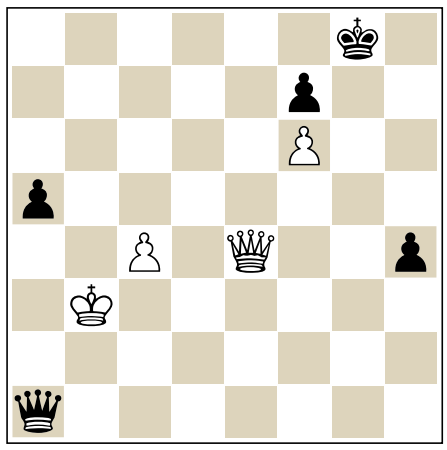
Short-Carlsen
position after 37.♗c6

JOHN SAUNDERS

Following a misguided winning attempt in his last-round game against Nigel Short, Magnus Carlsen suddenly had to pull out all the stops to save the draw.

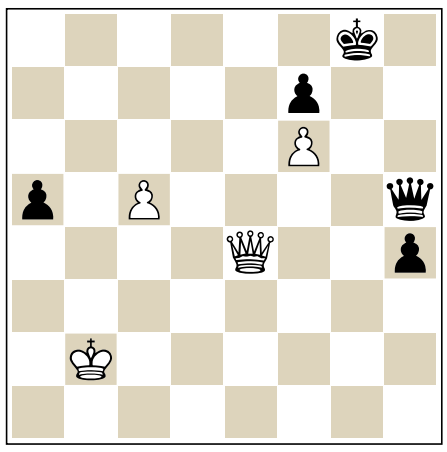
Black had gone **37...g5**, when after **38.fxg5 f4** the black f-pawn looks unstoppable.

Play took a less forced course and then came the moment that afterwards everyone kept talking about for hours.



Short-Carlsen
position after 54.♔b3

Now with the simple 54...♕xf6, Black could have reached a position that should end in a draw, but that still requires some accuracy from White. So what was Carlsen thinking about? Even his father Henrik, normally all quiet when following his son's games, lost his nerve a bit and muttered underneath his breath, 'Why doesn't he simply take on f6 and make a draw?' The reason was, because his son had seen that it was a draw and wanted more! **54...♕d1+ 55.♔b2 ♕h5** This is still a draw, but according to Short it deserved a double question mark from a practical point of view. Suddenly Black is hanging over a dangerous precipice. **56.c5** Of course! Because the pawn cannot be taken.



56...h3 Afterwards Carlsen admitted that he had been at the point of taking the pawn until he suddenly realized that after 56...♕xc5 57.♕g2+ he is mated: 57...♔f8 58.♕a8+ and mate. Now he plunged into thought and spent the 15 minutes he had left on his moves to the time-control. For a moment he believed he was lost, but having regained his composure he found the way to the draw. **57.c6 a4 58.♔a2 ♕d1 59.♕e8+ ♔h7 60.♕xf7+ ♔h6 61.c7 ♕c2+ 62.♔a3 h2 63.♕g7+ ♔h5 64.♕h8+ ♔g6 65.♕g8+ ♔xf6 66.c8♕ ♕xc8 67.♕xc8 h1♕ 68.♕a6+ ♔e5 69.♕b5+ ♕d5 70.♔xa4 ♕xb5+ 71.♔xb5** Draw. As Carlsen laconically remarked later, 'It's always nice to end with bare kings.'

And so Magnus Carlsen ended 2009 on a high note, winning the London Chess Classic and securing first place on the January 1, 2010, FIDE world rankings. He had not been as dominating as in Nanjing, but even so he had scored another impressive and fully deserved victory.

Later that evening, at a private prize-giving dinner at Simpson's in the Strand, the prizes were distributed. And those who wondered if the anonymous sponsors had any announcements to make were not disappointed. Next year there will be another London Chess Classic, and they have the option from FIDE to do the 2012 World Championship Match!

NOTES BY

Magnus Carlsen

EO 3.4 – A29
Magnus Carlsen
Vladimir Kramnik
London 2009 (1)

1.c4

The English Opening, obviously a fitting choice for the first round in London, especially as it is exactly the same pawn as I picked in the drawing of lots (no.1 obviously). Besides, I felt that chances were rather slim that I would get a worse position with the text than I got with 1.d4 against him in Moscow.

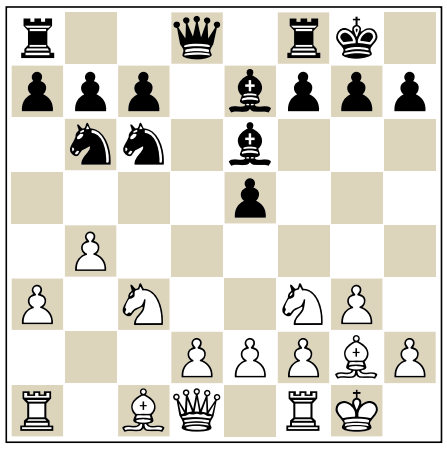
1...♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.g3 d5

This has been Kramnik's choice of late, and was what I had expected. So far, White has (unsurprisingly) been unable to prove that having an extra tempo in the Dragon gives him an advantage.

5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♗g2 ♘b6 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.a3

Other moves here include 8.♖b1, which can be met by the sane 8...a5 (or the insane 8...g5), after which White has not been able to gain an advantage. Or 8.d3, leading to more or less normal play.

8...0-0 9.b4 ♗e6



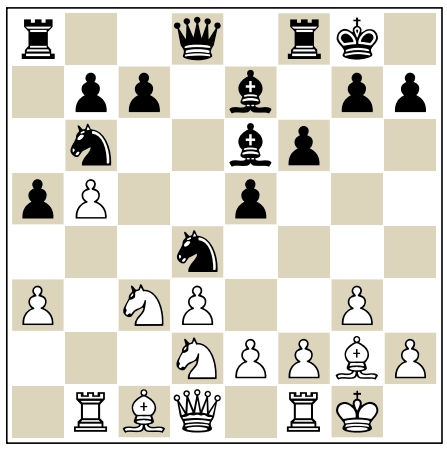
10.♖b1

10.b5 ♘d4 11.♘xe5?? ♗b3 is a well-known trap, and not the best way to start the tournament!

10...f6 11.d3 a5

This move, which Kramnik played very quickly, has recently been overtaken as the main move by the immediate 11...♘d4. The text complicates play a bit: Black will gain an outpost on b3 for his bishop after an eventual ...a4, as well as some pressure against a3, but on the other hand the c7 pawn is now backward.

12.b5 ♘d4 13.♘d2



13...♕c8

13...♗d5 is the other main line here, while 13...♘d5?? 14.♗xd5 ♗xd5 15.e3 is a well-known trap: Black loses a piece by force.

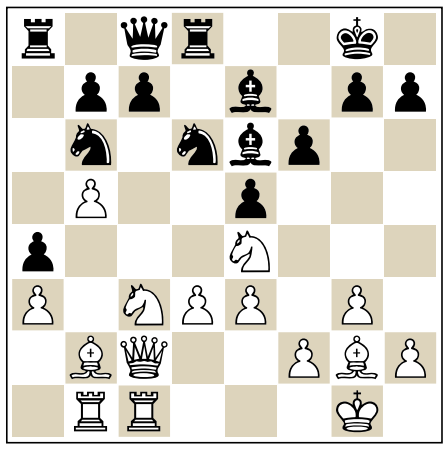
14.e3 ♘f5 15.♕c2

Here or on the next move (I was more or less out of the book here), I considered playing a4 myself, which however has the drawback of giving up the b4-square, where a black bishop might eventually sit comfortably.

15...♖d8 16.♗b2 a4 17.♖fc1

Quite logically, White is piling up the pressure along the c-file.

17...♘d6 18.♘de4



18...♘e8!

Even though this unlucky knight ended up staying here for the rest of the game, I think this is a good move, as the knight is protecting c7, while the white pieces are stepping on each others toes.

19.♕e2!

I liked this move. I bring the queen a bit closer to the kingside and increase my influence over some light squares, which will be important in the likely event of White playing f4. Perhaps even more importantly though, it was hard to find another useful move. 19.♘e2?! ♗b3 is awkward, since c7 is now protected: 20.♕c3 ♕d7!, winning a pawn.

19...♗f8

19...♗h3 20.♗f3 should be an improvement of the position for White, as Black will now have to reckon with g4.

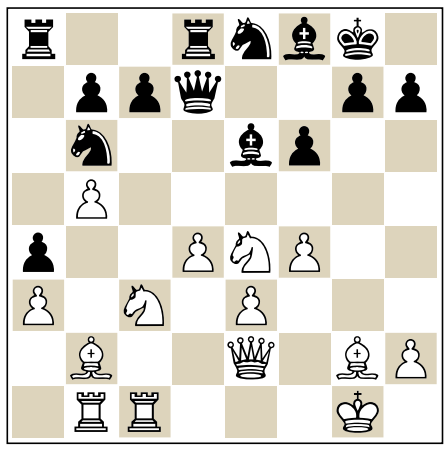
20.f4

I felt that there was no other plan here. f4 increases my central control, but at the same time weakens my position a bit.

20...exf4 21.gxf4 ♕d7

Consistent, as it more or less forces my next move.

22.d4



I was aiming for this position, believing that I would have good chances because of the dynamic possibilities connected with ♘c5. I think Kramnik was not too unhappy with it either, as yet another weakness is created in my position.

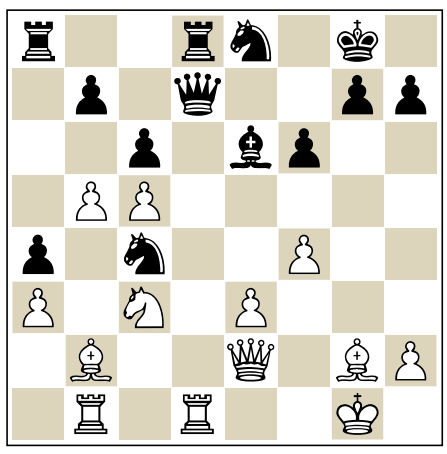
22...c6

This was more or less the only move I considered, as I thought that Black had to do something

to prevent b7 from collapsing completely.

22...♗c4!? 23.♕f2 ♗d3 was actually quite good, but Kramnik may have decided (and if so, probably quite correctly) that there was no reason to start concrete play, since 24.♘c5! looked strong during the game. Still, Black is probably fine here after 24...♗xc5 25.dxc5 ♘c4! (25...♗xb1 26.♖xb1 gives White excellent compensation for the exchange, as Black cannot play 26...♘c4, due to 27.♗d5+) 26.♗xb7 ♕g4+ 27.♕g2 ♕xg2+ 28.♗xg2 ♖ab8.

23.♘c5 ♗xc5 24.dxc5 ♘c4 25.♖d1



25...♕c7?!

The most solid move. This move also has some downsides though, as it doesn't attack the c-pawn, the capture of which would leave the passive knight on e8 an excellent square on d6, and it also takes away the c7-square from the very same knight.

It took me some time to refute the crazy-looking 25...♘d2 over the board, but fortunately it's not very hard: 26.bxc6 bxc6 27.♘e4 ♘xb1 (27...♗g4 28.♕xd2!) 28.♖xd7 ♖xd7 29.♘d6! (29.♕e1 ♖b8 30.♕xb1 ♖db7 is not at all clear) 29...♘xd6 30.♗xc6, with decisive material gains.

Attacking c5 with 25...♕e7 looked very risky to me during the game, but is probably possible: 26.bxc6 bxc6 27.♗xc6 ♖xd1+ (27...♖ac8 28.♖xd8 ♕xd8 29.♗xa4 ♖xc5 30.♘e4 ♖c8 should be a draw as well, as Black is very active) 28.♖xd1 ♖c8 29.♘d5 ♕xc5 30.♗d4. I stopped my calculations here during the game, thinking that White is winning material. However, it turns out that after 30...♕d6 31.♕xc4 ♔h8 White surprisingly has no way of keeping it: 32.♕xa4 ♗xd5 33.♗xd5 ♕xd5, and due to White's weakened king and offside queen, Black should not lose.

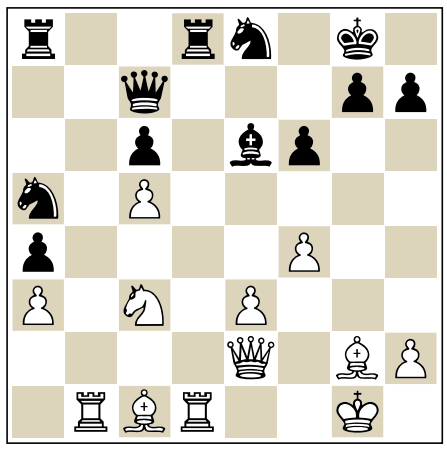
26.♗c1!

Bad bishops protect good (potentially at least) pawns, and I needed this one to protect e3 and a3! Additionally, the knight might now turn out to be exposed on c4, as both ♖d4 and ♖b4 are in the air. However, I still don't think that White has any real advantage, especially in a practical game, as he is still slightly exposed.

26...♘a5

Black needs to relocate this knight in order to create counterplay.

27.bxc6 bxc6



28.♘xa4?!

I was very happy to discover that this move does not lose any material, even though it looks a bit loose.

28.♖b4 was another move I considered, but I did not like 28...♘b3 (28...♗b3 29.♖xd8 ♖xd8 30.♗f1, and a4 falls without any real compensation) 29.♘xa4 ♘xc1 30.♖xc1 f5, when Black has some counterplay. However, White is probably still a bit better, and I

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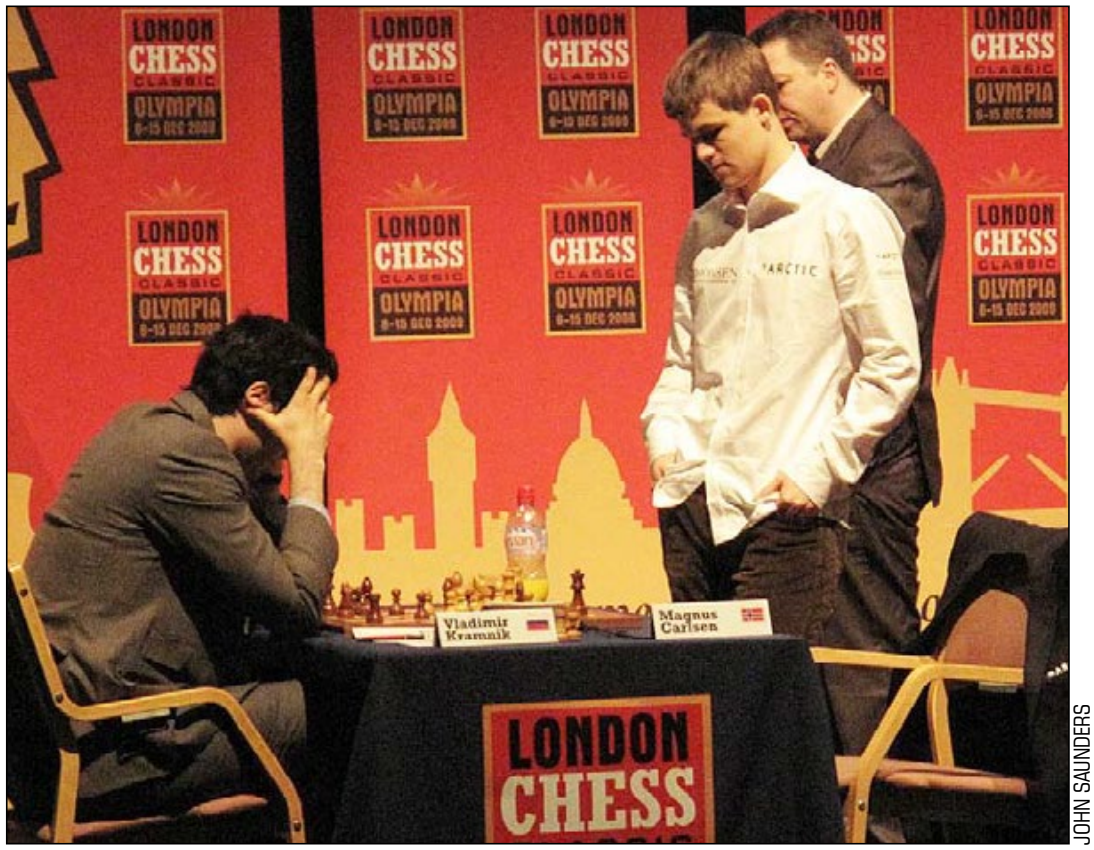


JOHN SAUNDERS

An auspicious start. Magnus Carlsen sees that he is going to win the crucial Round 1 encounter with Vladimir Kramnik, and so does Nigel Short.

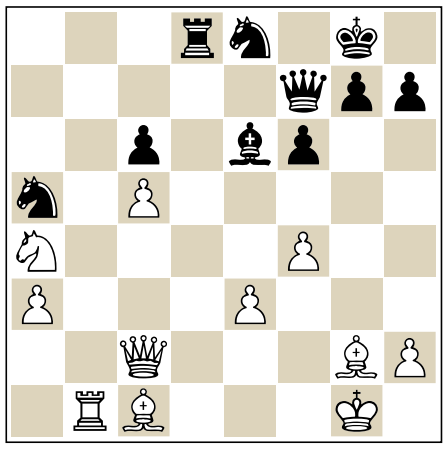
should probably have gone for this.

28...♖xd1+

28...♘b3 29.♘b6 (29.♖xd8 ♖xd8 30.♗b2 is Rybka's first choice, but looks too risky to me) looked good for White to me due to 29...♘xc1 30.♖bxc1 ♖xd1+ 31.♕xd1 ♖xa3 32.♕d4, with some kind of domination, though Black still retains some drawing chances.

29...♖a5 is what I missed; now Black has good counterplay.

29.♕xd1 ♖d8 30.♕c2 ♕f7

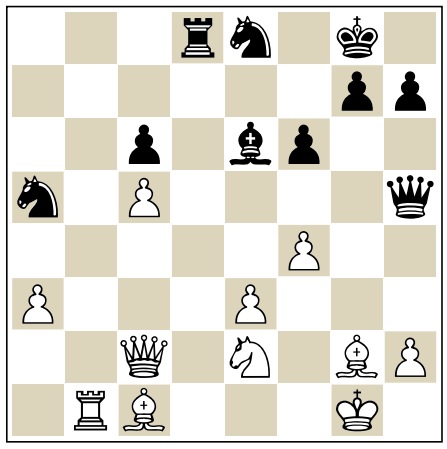


31.♘c3

31.♘b6 was my original intention, but I eventually rejected it because of 31...♗b3 32.♕c3 ♖d1+ 33.♔f2 ♕h5 34.♖xb3 ♘xb3 35.♕xb3+ ♔h8, when it seemed to me that Black had too much activity.

31...♕h5 32.♘e2

I was very happy with my position here, thinking that I was on my way to consolidation.



32...♗f5?

Perhaps his only real mistake in this game. He could have retained dynamic equality with the amazing 32...♔f8!!, with the idea of 33...♗b3. The point, which we probably both missed, is that White cannot play 33.♘d4 because of 33...♖xd4 34.exd4 ♗f5, and Black is at least not worse, as 35.♗e4 fails to 35...♕g6+ 36.♕g2 ♕xg2+!.

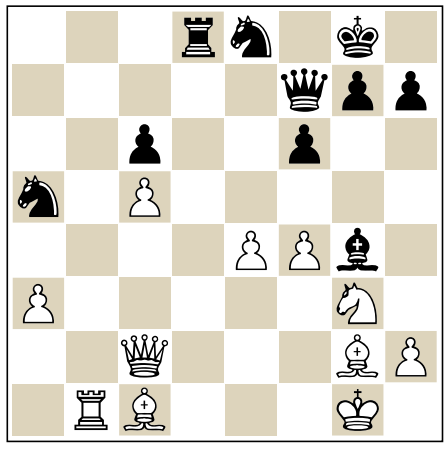
32...♗g4 33.♘g3 ♖d1+ 34.♕xd1 is probably why he decided to play 32...♗f5.

33.e4 ♗g4 34.♘g3

Now, however, Black has nothing.

34...♕f7

Kramnik had probably been hoping that 34...♖d1+ would be good here, but this is easily refuted by the calm 35.♗f1 (and not 35.♕xd1?? ♕xc5+).



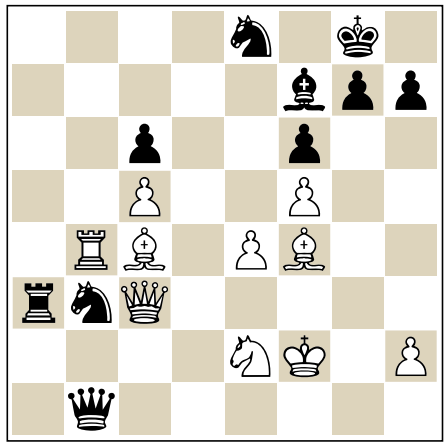
35.♗f1! ♗e6 36.♕c3 ♖a8 37.♖b4

Now White is in complete control, with a positional as well as a material advantage. The knight on e8 still has no prospects.

37...♕d7 38.f5 ♗f7 39.♗f4 ♕d1 40.♔f2 ♘b3

Desperation, but it was either this or losing slowly without counterplay.

41.♗e2 ♕b1 42.♗c4 ♖xa3 43.♘e2



Black resigned, as he is completely tied up and defenceless against threats like ♖b8 and ♗xf7.

43.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 44.♕c4+ ♔f8 45.♖b8 ♖a2+ 46.♘e2 ♖xe2+ 47.♕xe2 would have won even more quickly, but would not have led to such a nice final position ☺.

NOTES BY
David Howell

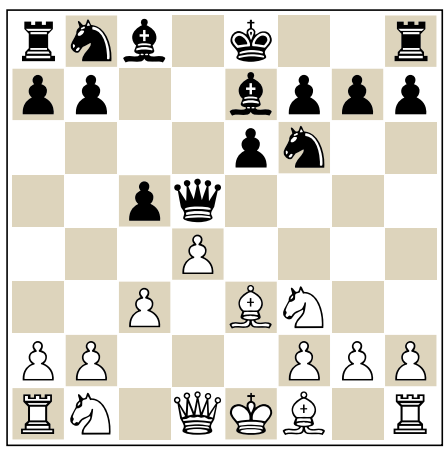
SI 46.6 – B22
David Howell
Magnus Carlsen
London 2009 (3)

This was my third meeting with Magnus. The first was in the final round of the World Under-12 Championship in 2002 and the second was at the First Saturday tournament in Budapest a year later. In both games I held the draw with black, but obviously Magnus has come a long way since then! I was relishing the opportunity to test myself against him again.

1.e4 c5 2.c3

An old favourite of mine, which I've played since childhood. The usual dilemma had faced me that morning: whether to stick to something that I was comfortable with (but far from critical), or whether to gamble with an Open Sicilian. Before the tournament, I was planning the latter – my strategy was to be brave – but a few hours before the game, I changed my mind again. Probably not ideal, but my reasoning went something like this: you're playing the new World Number 1. While you're still feeling your way into the tournament, he's won his first two games convincingly. Better to start a fight on your own terms, right? Thus my decision was made.

2...d5 3.exd5 ♕xd5 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 e6 6.♗e3 ♗e7



A small surprise – 6...cxd4 is the normal move, and although I had briefly looked at this a couple of years ago, I was virtually on my own from here.

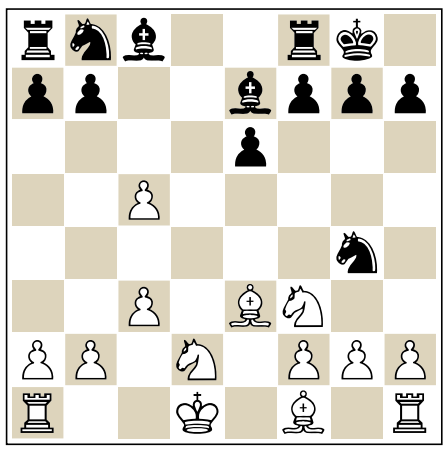
7.dxc5!?

In hindsight, perhaps 7.c4 ♕d8 8.♘c3 0-0 9.♗e2 was more sensible. In the game, White temporarily wins a pawn but this is compensated for by Black's lead in development.

7...♕xd1+ 8.♔xd1 0-0 9.♘bd2

Not the move I wanted to play, but 9.b4 a5 10.a3 axb4 11.cxb4 ♘d5 12.♗d2 ♘c6 demonstrates how easily Black can gain the initiative. Already White is struggling to cling to his extra pawn.

9...♘g4

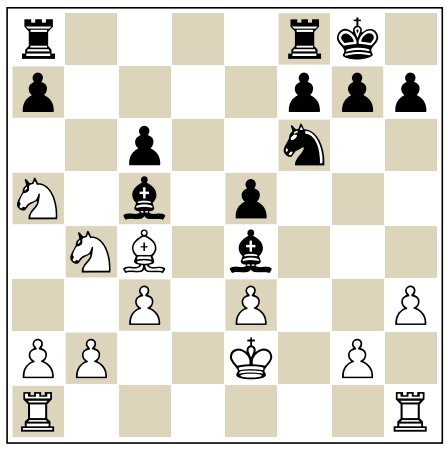


10.♘b3

10.b4 looks critical, but it's still difficult to draw conclusions, e.g.: 10...a5 11.a3 axb4 (11...♘xe3+ 12.fxe3 axb4 13.cxb4 ♘c6 14.♘b3 ♗f6 15.♘fd4 ♘xd4 16.exd4 ♖d8 17.♗d3 is roughly equal) 12.cxb4 ♘c6 13.b5 ♘a5, with unclear play.

10...♘xe3+ 11.fxe3 ♘d7 12.c6 bxc6 13.♘a5 ♗c5 14.♘d4 ♘f6 15.♗c4 ♘g4 16.♔e2 e5 17.♘c2 ♗f5 18.h3! ♘f6 19.♘b4 ♗e4

An unbalanced and highly original position has arisen: during the game my opponent had been playing quite quickly and this made me nervous. However, it seems that Black cannot take advantage of White's awkwardly placed pieces, and the weakness of c6 gives White decent counterplay in return for the two bishops.



20.♘bxc6

20.♖hg1 ♖ab8 21.a3 was also playable, but I wanted to clarify the situation as soon as possible.

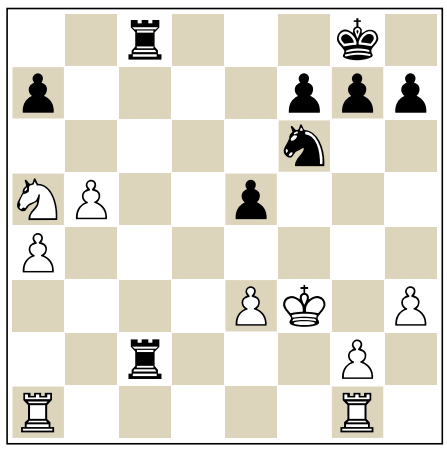
20...♖fe8

Perhaps Black could have tried 20...♖ac8 21.♘xe5 ♖ce8 22.♘f3 (22.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 23.♘xf7 ♔xf7 must be good for Black) 22...♗xf3+ 23.gxf3 ♖xe3+ 24.♔d2 ♖xf3, when Black's superior pieces give him some chances, although White should hold, e.g.: 25.♖af1 ♖g3 26.♘c6 ♘e4+ 27.♔c1 ♗a3 28.♖h2 ♖xc3+ 29.♖c2, with equal chances.

21.♖hg1 ♗b6 22.b4 ♖ac8 23.b5 ♗xa5

Maintaining the tension with 23...♖c7 was also possible, but White has the option of transposing to the game: 24.a4 ♖ec8 25.♗d3 ♗xd3+ 26.♔xd3 ♗xa5 27.♘xa5 ♖xc3+.

24.♘xa5 ♖c5 25.a4 ♖ec8 26.♗d3 ♗xd3+ 27.♔xd3 ♖xc3+ 28.♔e2 ♖c2+ 29.♔f3



NEW IN CHESS

David Howell: 'My first thought was to wonder how long I could survive before resigning, and many others expressed a similar view after the game.'

29...e4+

29...♖8c3 was the move that scared me the most during the game, but it seems that White needn't worry: 30.♘c6! e4+ 31.♔f4 ♘d5+ 32.♔xe4 ♘xe3 33.♘xa7 ♘xg2 34.♘c6 ♖d2 35.♖xg2! ♖c4+ 36.♔f3 ♖c3+ 37.♔e4 ♖c4+ is just one possible line.

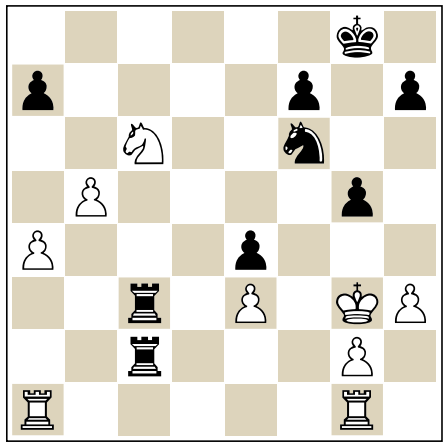
30.♔f4

At first sight, Black seems to be doing quite well – White's king is trapped in no man's land, his rooks are passive and the e3 pawn is terminally weak. But during the game I was quietly confident: as long as there is no checkmate, White can create some quick threats with ♘c6.

30...♖8c5

Cutting White's king from adventuring even further.

31.♘c6 g5+ 32.♔g3 ♖5c3



33.♘e7+?!

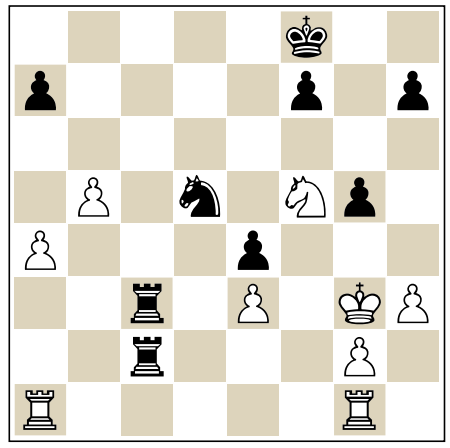
Cracking under the pressure at the critical moment!

Correct was 33.♘xa7! ♖xe3+ 34.♔h2 g4 35.♔h1!, and Black's mating threats are only visual: 35...gxh3 36.b6 (36.gxh3+ ♔f8 37.♖g2 is braver but also probably equal: 37...♖xh3+ 38.♔g1 ♖xg2+ 39.♔xg2 ♖b3 40.a5 ♘d5 41.b6 ♘xb6) 36...♘g4 37.b7 ♘f2+ 38.♔h2 ♘g4+, with perpetual check.

33...♔f8

The computer seems to prefer 33...♔g7 34.♘f5+ ♔g6 35.♘e7+ ♔h5 36.♖ae1 ♖a3.

34.♘f5 ♘d5



35.♖ge1??

A horrible blunder in time-trouble. 35.♖ad1! was my original intention. I rejected it due to 35...♖d3 36.♔g4 f6, although Black is only slightly better.

35...♘f4! 36.♖g1

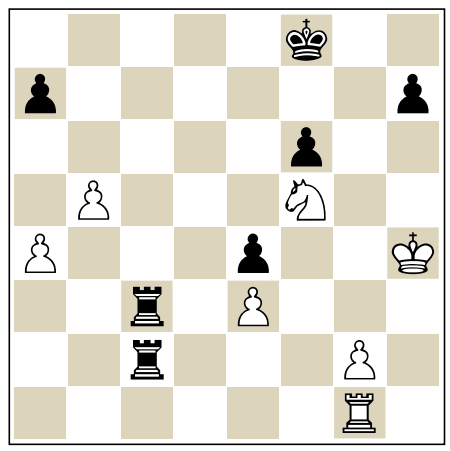
Humiliatingly, the rook has to return. 36.♔g4 ♖xg2+ 37.♘g3 ♘d5 38.♖g1 h6! is simply winning for Black.

36...♘e2+ 37.♔g4 ♘xg1 38.♖xg1 f6 39.h4 gxh4 40.♔xh4

Finally the time-control was reached and I could think freely.

My first thought was to wonder how long I could survive before resigning, and many others expressed a similar view after the game.

But here Magnus sunk into a deep think... and I realised matters were not completely clear...



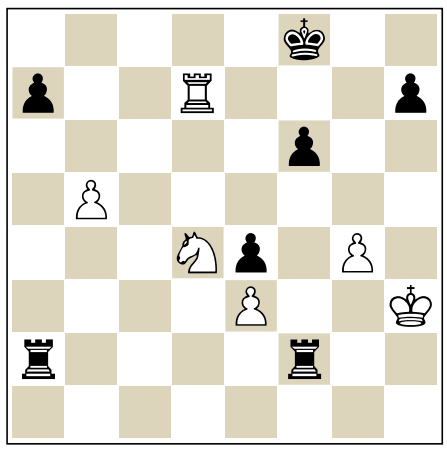
40...♖a3

The other obvious option was 40...♖c1, but in the brief post-mortem Magnus expressed doubt about whether he could break through after: 41.♖xc1 ♖xc1 42.a5 ♖a1 43.a6, with a blockade of sorts when the knight comes to d4: 43...♔e8 44.♔g3 ♔d7 45.♔f4. Like in the game, Black may have good winning chances but there will be a lot of difficulty converting.

41.g4 ♖xa4 42.♖d1

Now White's rook becomes active.

42...♖aa2 43.♖d7 ♖h2+ 44.♔g3 ♖hg2+ 45.♔h3 ♖gf2 46.♘d4

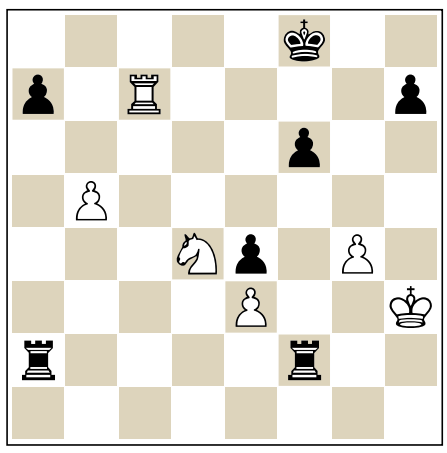


46...♔g8?!

The first sign that my opponent wasn't sure how to make progress.

47.♖e7 ♔f8 48.♖c7!?

48.♖xe4 lets Black's king out of its box: 48...♔f7 49.♔g3 ♖g2+ 50.♔h3 ♖h2+ 51.♔g3 h5.



48...♔e8

It's not easy to be critical of Black's play, but perhaps 48...♖h2+!? was a good place to start: 49.♔g3 h5! 50.♘e6+ ♔g8 51.g5 h4+ 52.♔f4 ♖hf2+ (52...fxg5+? 53.♔f5) 53.♔g4 fxg5 54.♖g7+ ♔h8 55.♖e7 h3! is the computer's suggestion, with tricky play.

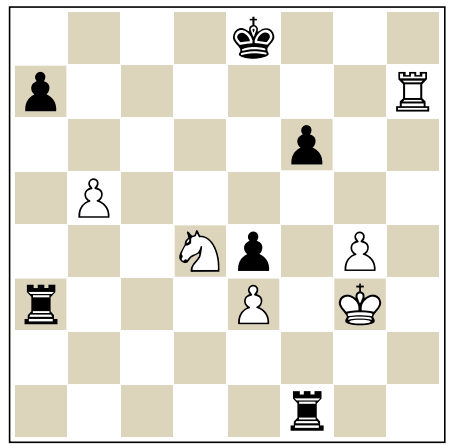
49.♔g3 ♖f1

Perhaps better was 49...h6!?.

50.♖xh7!?

Greedy, but perhaps the best chance.

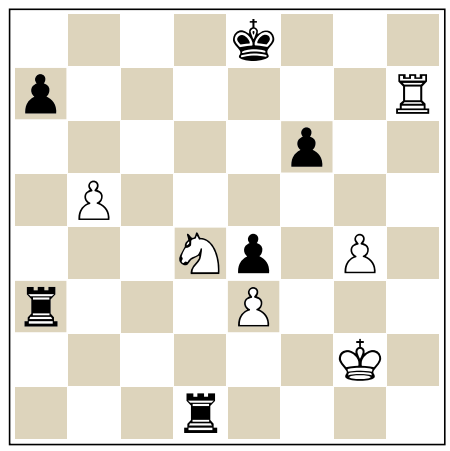
50...♖a3!



51.♔g2?!

Unfortunately flawed and, combined with the next move, a pretty embarrassing moment for White. 51.♘f5! ♖f3+ 52.♔g2 ♖a2+ 53.♔g1 makes it harder for Black, as there is no obvious way to reactivate the rook on f3: 53...♔d8 (53...♖ff2? 54.♖xa7!) 54.♖f7 ♖ff2 55.♖xa7 ♖g2+ 56.♔h1 ♖h2+ 57.♔g1 ♖ag2+ 58.♔f1 ♖b2 59.♔g1 ♖hd2 60.♖a8+ ♔c7 61.♖a1 ♖xb5, with decent winning chances for Black.

51...♖d1



52.♘f5?? ♖d7??

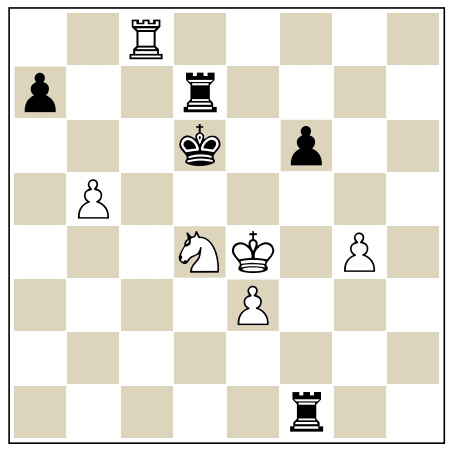
Mutual chess blindness!

As Malcolm Pein pointed out to both of us immediately after the game, 52...♖a2+ wins on the spot: 53.♔g3 ♖g1+ 54.♔f4 ♖f2+ 55.♔xe4 ♖xg4+ 56.♔d5 ♖xf5+ 57.♔e6 ♖e5+.

53.♖h8+ ♔f7 54.♔g3 ♖b3 55.♔f4 ♖b1 56.♔xe4 ♖f1 57.♖h7+ ♔e6 58.♖h8

58.♘g7+ ♔e7 59.♘f5+ seems to draw already, since it's risky for Black to play 59...♔d8 60.♖h8+ ♔c7 61.♖f8.

58...♖c7 59.♘d4+ ♔d6 60.♖d8+ ♖d7 61.♖c8



White has now established all his pieces on ideal squares and there is no way for Black to break through – the knight on d4 creates a fortress all on its own! Magnus tried to probe for a few more moves, but to no avail.

61...♖g7 62.♖d8+ ♖d7 63.♖c8 ♖e7+ 64.♔d3 ♖c7 65.♖d8+ ♖d7 66.♖g8 ♖g1 67.♔e2 ♔c5 68.♔f2 ♖b1 69.♖f8 ♖d6 70.♖f7 ♖b2+ 71.♔f3 ♖a2 72.♔e4 ♔b6 73.♖f8 ♖g2 74.♔f3 ♖h2 75.♖b8+ ♔c7 76.♖a8 ♔b7 77.♖f8 ♖h7 78.♔f4 ♖h1 79.♔f3

And here, after requesting and receiving permission from the arbiters (due to the Sofia Rules), we agreed a draw.

This was one of the most testing and confusing games of my life. Even with computer analysis, it is difficult to fully understand certain parts of the game. But the result gave me confidence for the rest of the tournament, and there is no doubt things would have turned out differently otherwise.

NOTES BY

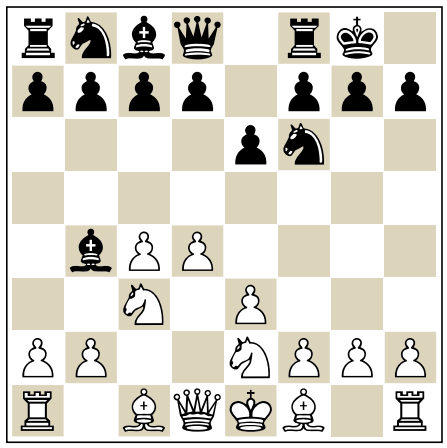
Michael Adams

NI 10.4 – E46
Magnus Carlsen
Michael Adams
London 2009 (6)

For most of my chess career major events in the UK have been few and far between, so it was very pleasant to take part in this high class tournament which was a great success both on and off the board.

One of the few areas for improvement was my drawing of lots in which I secured an additional Black, and that colour against both Kramnik and Carlsen...

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♘e2

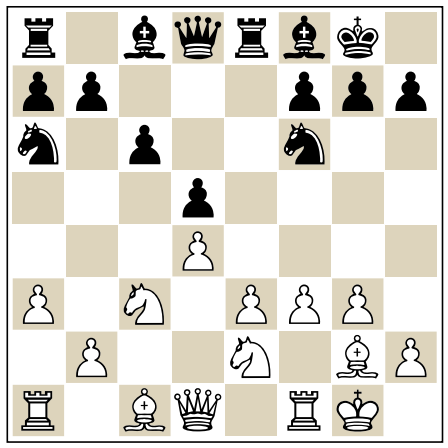


Unexpected – I don't think Magnus had played this line, heading for a complex middlegame, before.

5...d5 6.cxd5 exd5 7.g3 ♖e8 8.♗g2 ♗f8 9.0-0 ♘a6

It looks logical to play 9...a5 here, seizing some space on the queenside, but I worried that my opponent's move order, omitting a3, might have some deep significance, and settled for a more solid move.

10.a3 c6 11.f3



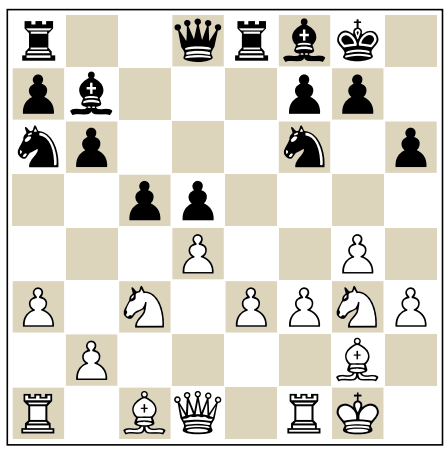
11...c5

Moving the pawn for a second time makes it feel like Black's play has been inaccurate, but in general it's an occupational hazard in this line. Before White plays f3 the pawn is needed on c6 to protect d5, but after the move is played it needs to advance to counter the threat of e4.

12.g4 h6 13.h3

I wasn't entirely sure about the ugly 13.h4 here, but it isn't very classical. Instead, Magnus reinforces his g-pawn so his colleague can inch another square forward. Although it was far from my mind during the game, perhaps implementing the same strategy via a different move order with 11.h3 and 12.g4, keeping the option to move the f-pawn one or two squares as required, might have created some extra options.

13...b6 14.♘g3 ♗b7



15.f4

After the game Carlsen mentioned

NEW IN CHESS

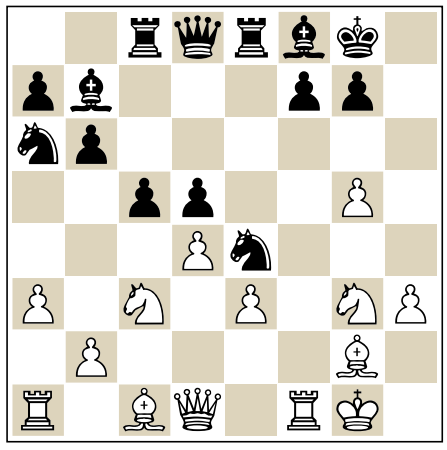
After a bad period of fourteen months, Michael Adams proved that he can still play against 'guys like Carlsen and Kramnik'.

that 15.♕c2 ♖c8 16.♕f2 ♘c7 17.♗d2, improving the coordination of White's pieces before making the big play on the kingside, would have been more circumspect. The immediate assault has its attractions but is a risky strategy, as his queenside pieces could get caught napping once the position opens up.

15...♖c8

My immediate intention was 15...♘c7, but after a bit more thought I realised that it was important to bring the rook into the game as quickly as possible. This also has the advantage that Black's knight retains some options to enter the fray via the c5-square.

16.g5 hxg5 17.fxg5 ♘e4



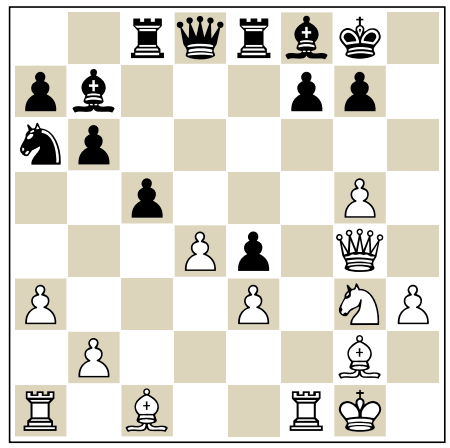
18.♘cxe4

Around here I had a sudden panic that some horrible sacrifice on f7 would arrive. However it's not that big a surprise that there aren't enough white pieces in the attack after 18.♖xf7 ♔xf7 19.g6+ ♔e7, when Black's king escapes to safety on the queenside.

Magnus suggested the rather more relevant 18.♘gxe4 dxe4 19.♕b3 c4 20.♕b5, although both 20...♘c7 21.♕f5 (21.♕xc4 ♘e6) 21...♕e7 22.g6 fxg6 23.♕xg6 ♕e6 and 20...g6 21.h4 ♗d6 look quite viable for Black.

18...dxe4 19.♕g4

Now if 19.♖xf7 ♔xf7 20.g6+ the computer insists that 20...♔xg6 21.♕h5+ ♔f6 22.♗d2 ♔e7 is perfectly safe, but the more practical 20...♔e7 is also sufficient.



19...g6

I felt this move was essential, which for a human it is, but my electronic irritant suggests 19...cxd4 is also feasible.

Here 20.g6 seemed to me a perfectly good reason to cease my analysis, but 20...fxg6 21.♕xg6 ♕d7 22.♘f5 ♖c6 23.♘h6+ ♔h8 24.♘f7+ ♔g8 25.♕h5 ♖f6 26.♖xf6 gxf6 27.♕g6+ ♗g7 leaves White still searching for a killer blow.

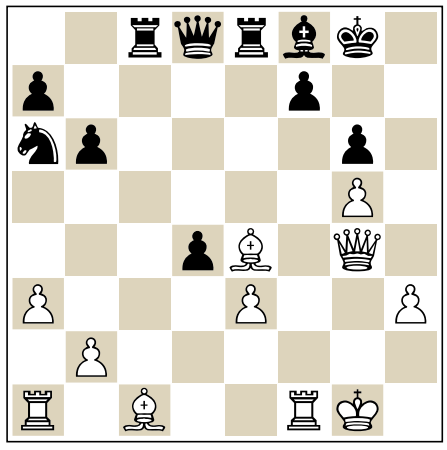
The other tempting possibility 20.♘h5 can be met by either 20...♖e5 21.♘f6+ gxf6 22.gxf6+ ♔h7 23.♖f5 ♖xf5 24.♕xf5+ ♔h6 25.♗d2 d3, after which White doesn't seem to have more than perpetual check, or 20...♖c6 21.♘f6+ ♖xf6 22.gxf6 ♘c5, which looks quite reasonable for Black.

20.♘xe4

In the commentary room post game I couldn't recall what I had intended against the better 20.♗xe4, but in fact I was considering the line 20...♗xe4 (20...♗d5 is also interesting here) 21.♘xe4 ♗g7 22.♕f4 ♕d7 (the inhuman 22...♖f8 23.♘f6+ ♗xf6 24.gxf6 ♘c7 is reasonable according to the machine) 23.♘d6 cxd4 24.♘xc8 ♖xc8 25.exd4 ♘c7, which delays the bishop's development further, as 26.♗e3 ♘d5 is not possible. After 26.♕f3 ♘e6 27.♗e3 ♘xd4 28.♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 29.♔h1 ♖c2 Black's safer king compensates for the exchange.

20...♗xe4 21.♗xe4 cxd4

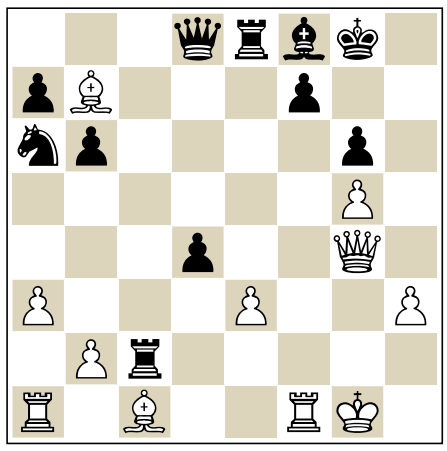
The idea behind my play. Although White can now win material, the loss of time entailed puts the denuded white monarch at too much risk from Black's very active pieces. From now on things become razor sharp, with many long variations which were not easy to calculate and several of which I only entangled analysing the game afterwards.



22.♗b7?

The logical continuation of White's play, but it was time to bail out with 22.♕f3!, when the balance hasn't been seriously disturbed. Giving up the exchange looks promising: 22...♖xe4 23.♕xe4, but White also has his chances, in either 23...d3 24.♕f4 ♕d7 25.♗d2 (25.b4 ♖c2) 25...♗g7 26.♖ac1 or 23...♕xg5+ 24.♕g4 ♕xg4+ 25.hxg4 d3 26.b4.

22...♖c2



23.♗xa6

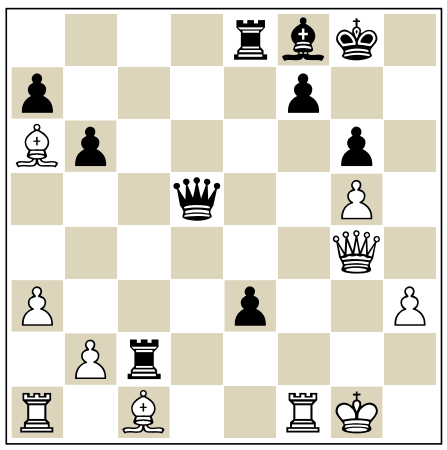
Both players erroneously assumed that 23.♕f4 would simply transpose to the game, following 23...♕c7? 24.♗xa6.

However, White's bishop is not obliged to capture the black knight, and after the correct 24.♗d5! there doesn't seem to be anything special for Black. Following 24...♖e7, 25.♗b3 ♖e2

26.♕xc7 ♖xc7 27.exd4 ♗g7 28.♖d1 ♖e4 29.♔g2 is nothing special. It is striking in these lines how useful White's light-squared bishop is, contrasting to the game, where it becomes sidelined and the open spaces on the kingside become very sensitive.

Even the exchange of queens is not that clear-cut: 24.♕xc7 ♘xc7 25.exd4 ♗g7 is good for Black, although White is still fighting after 26.d5.

Returning to 23.♕f4, there is a much stronger move: 23...♕d7!, forcing White to capture the booty: 24.♗xa6 dxe3 (24...♕xh3 25.♕xf7+ ♔h8 26.♖f2 seems to hold, e.g. 26...♕g4+ 27.♔f1 dxe3 28.♖xc2 ♕d1+ 29.♔g2 ♕xc2+ 30.♔h3) 25.♕g4 ♕d5



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

26.♗e2 ♗c5! (again the key move and White isn't able to coordinate his pieces fast enough to prevent his king becoming fatally exposed) 27.b4 ♗d4 28.♖b1 ♖e5 29.h4 ♖e4 30.♕f3 ♖xe2 31.♕xe2 ♖xh4.

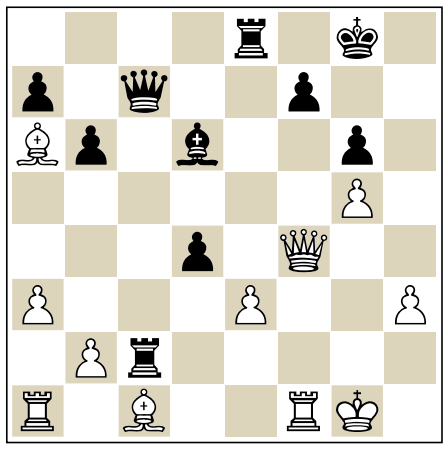
The best practical chance is 26.♕f3 (instead of 26.♗e2) 26...♕xf3 27.♖xf3 e2 28.♗e3 ♗c5 29.♖e1 ♗xe3+ 30.♔g2 ♗xg5 31.♖f2 ♖xb2 32.♖exe2, although this ending should be winning for Black.

23...♕c7 24.♕f4 The opposite-coloured bishops wouldn't save White after 24.♖f2 ♖xc1+ 25.♖xc1 ♕xc1+ 26.♖f1 ♕xe3+ 27.♔g2 ♗d6, when in addition to his other problems the material balance has tipped in Black's favour.

24...♗d6

NEW IN CHESS

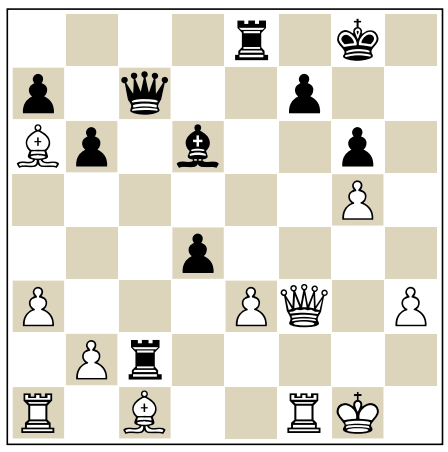
Tournament director Malcolm Pein points out to his son what Vladimir Kramnik is showing his opponent in the analysis room.



25.♕f3

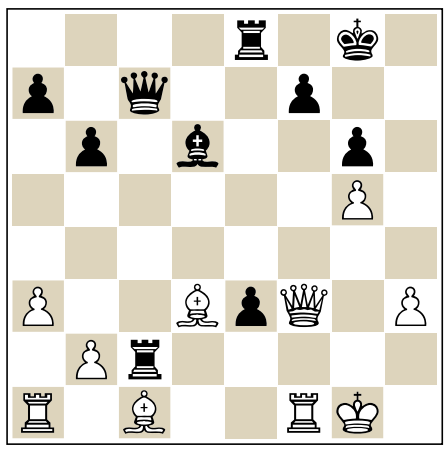
Instinctively, few players would think twice about this move, keeping up the pressure on f7 and maintaining a presence on the long diagonal.

However, the less natural 25.♕g4 is also not easy to crack, the hidden point being that as the pawn on g5 is defended ...♖e5 doesn't come with tempo in future variations. After 25...dxe3 26.♗e2 ♗g3 (embedding the bishop on White's second rank is best – if instead, 26...♖e5 27.h4 White has reasonable chances of survival: 27...♖ec5 28.♗xe3 ♖e5 29.♖ac1 ♖xe3 30.♖xc2 ♕xc2 31.♕c4 ♗h2+ 32.♔h1 ♕e4+ 33.♕xe4 ♖xe4 34.♗f3 ♖xh4 35.♗d5, with good drawing chances) 27.♕f3 ♗f2+ 28.♔h1 ♕c8! (accuracy is required here to breach the barricades – 28...♖xe2 looks tempting, but after delivering a lot of checks Black can only achieve a slightly better ending) 29.♔h2 (29.♔g2 ♖e5) 29...♕f5 30.♕xf5 (30.♔g2 ♕xg5+ 31.♔h1 ♕h4) 30...gxf5 31.♗f3 ♗h4+ 32.♔h1 e2 33.♗xe2 ♖exe2 34.♗f4 ♖xb2, and Black should be winning.



25...♗c5

The key moment. Both players felt there should be something decisive here, but neither of us could provide the necessary variations. My problem was that I was too attracted to forcing lines and didn't appreciate the strength of the simple capture 25...dxe3!. After 26.♗d3 now is the right time for



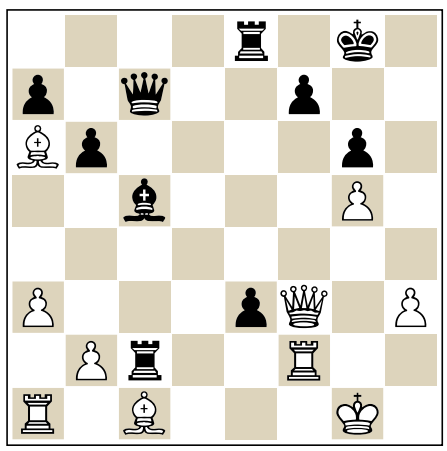
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

26...♗c5!, the killer blow which eluded both players, when White gradually succumbs: 27.♗xc2 e2+ 28.♔g2 exf1♕+ 29.♕xf1 (29.♔xf1 ♕h2 30.♕g2 ♖e1+) 29...♕c6+ 30.♔g3 ♗d6+ 31.♗f4 ♖e3+ 32.♔h4 ♖f3 33.♗xd6 ♖xf1 34.♖xf1 ♕xc2.

I wasn't entirely sure about 26.♗e2 either, but the long forcing line 26...♖e5 27.h4 ♖f5 28.♕a8+ ♗f8 29.♖xf5 ♖xe2 30.♗xe3 gxf5 31.♗f2 ♕f4 32.♖f1 ♖e4, cutting off the white queen, is decisive.

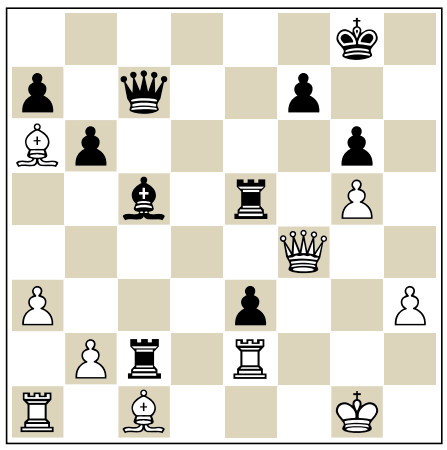
26.♕f4

I had thought White was forced to play 26.♖f2, which is also only vanquished by very precise play. I saw the correct 26...dxe3,



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

as the line 27.♖xc2 e2+ 28.♗e3 ♖xe3 would have been very welcome. Sadly, in the real world White would prefer 27.♖e2, with a trick of his own, as after 27...♗d4? 28.♖xc2 e2+ 29.♗e3 the tactical tables are turned and White wins. This disturbed me and I missed 27...♖e5!, an idea I unfortunately frequently underrated which allows Black a choice of wins after 28.♕f4 (28.h4 ♖f5).



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

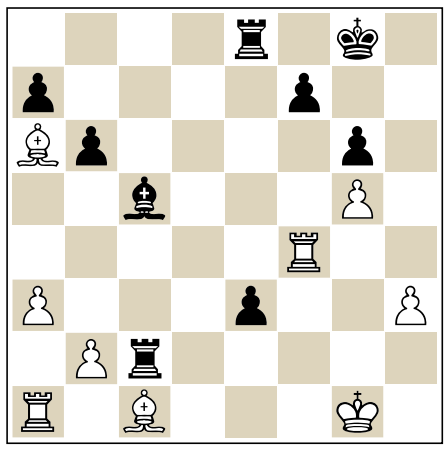
The aesthetic 28...♖d2 is prettiest. The threat is revealed after 29.b4 (alternatives are no better: 29.♗c4 ♖d1+ 30.♔h2 ♗d6, or 29.♗xd2 exd2+ 30.♔f1 ♖f5 31.♕xf5 gxf5 32.♖xd2 ♕f4+ 33.♔e2 ♕e3+ 34.♔d1 ♕g1+) 29...♖xg5+ 30.♕xg5 ♖d1+ 31.♔g2 ♕c6+ 32.♔g3 ♗d6+ 33.♔h4 ♕e4+ 34.♕g4 ♕e7+ 35.♕g5 ♖d4 mate. Or the more mundane 28...♗d4, which is also good enough, as now 29.♕xd4 ♖xg5+ or 29.♖xc2 ♕xc2 are sufficient.

Back at the board I would probably have played the interesting but less effective 26...♖xf2 27.♔xf2 ♕h2+ 28.♔e1 dxe3, although after the likely 29.♗c4 ♕f2+ 30.♕xf2 exf2+ 31.♔d2 ♖e1 32.b4 ♗e3+ 33.♔c2 f1♕ 34.♗xf1 ♖xf1 35.♖b1 the win is still far away.

26...♗d6 27.♕f3 ♗c5?

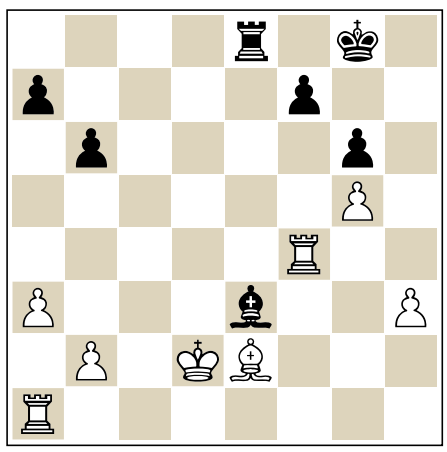
The last chance to find the winning continuation passes by as now the position has been repeated too many times to get back on the right path.

28.♕f4 ♕xf4 29.♖xf4 dxe3



In my original calculations I had assumed this was the end, but once my opponent had played 26.♕f4 I realised that White's king shuffles over to save the day. Running out of time and ideas I ended up playing down this line anyway, thinking I might still have some chances in the ending.

30.♔f1 e2+ 31.♔e1 ♖d8 32.♗xe2 ♖e8 33.♗d2 ♖xd2 34.♔xd2 ♗e3+



35.♔c2

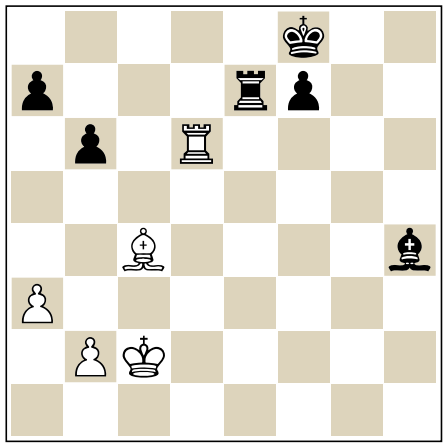
Initially I was under the delusion that White would have to play 35.♔d3 ♗xf4 or 35.♔e1 ♗xf4, when his awkwardly placed pieces give Black some hopes, possibly because I hallucinated that White's king had to remain in contact with his bishop.

35...♗xf4 36.♗c4 ♗xg5 37.♖g1 ♖e5 38.h4

Magnus could have saved us a bit of time by switching his rook back and forth – after 38.♖f1 ♖e7 39.♖g1 ♖c7 40.♔b3 ♖c5 41.♖f1 a repetition is inevitable.

38...♗xh4 39.♖xg6+ ♔f8 40.♖d6 ♖e7

With the time control reached it is clear that Black's extra pawn is largely symbolic, but I played on for a while, without making any kind of headway.



41.♗b5 ♖c7+ 42.♖c6 ♖e7 43.♖d6 ♖e5 44.♗c4 ♖f5 45.b4 ♔e7 46.♖d5 ♖f2+ 47.♖d2 ♖f4 48.♗b5 ♔e6 49.♖e2+ ♔f6 50.♖d2 ♔e6 51.♖e2+ ♔f6 52.♖d2 ♗f2 53.♖d7 a5 54.bxa5 bxa5 55.a4

Now that another pair of pawns have been eliminated the position is completely dead, and it only remains to satisfy the Sofia Rules.

55...♗c5 56.♖d5 ♗b4 57.♔d3 ♔e6 58.♖d4 ♖f3+ 59.♔e2 ♖a3 60.♗c4+ ♔e5 61.♖d3 ♖xd3 Draw.

NOTES BY

Luke McShane

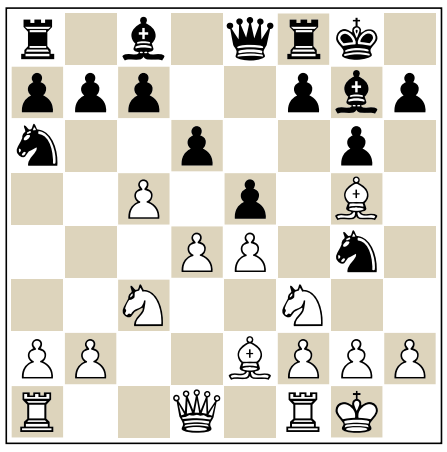
KI 15.7 – E94

Hikaru Nakamura

Luke McShane

London 2009

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 0-0 6.♘f3 e5 7.0-0 ♘a6 8.♗e3 ♘g4 9.♗g5 ♕e8 10.c5

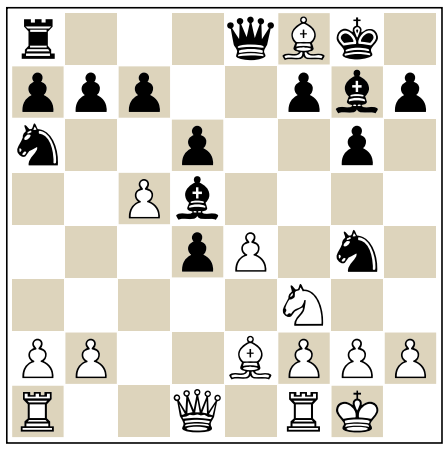


A very sharp variation. This is a move which looks like it should be premature, but when the position opens up, the ♕e8 and both knights turn out to be on slightly silly squares, whereas White's pieces coordinate beautifully.

10...exd4 11.♘d5 ♗e6

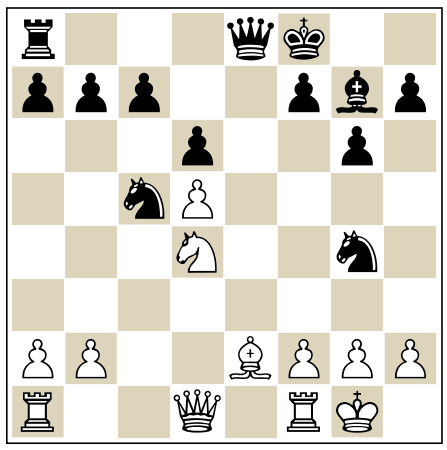
I'm sure Hikaru was very familiar with both of my losses with 11...♘xc5 and 11...♕xe4 in this position, but this rare move obviously came as a surprise. Unfortunately I didn't remember too many details, so after his long think over 12.♗e7 it was my turn in the tank.

12.♗e7 ♗xd5 13.♗xf8



13...♕xf8

13...♔xf8!? deserved attention, but I had missed the main idea: 14.exd5 ♘xc5. Here I noticed that 15.♘xd4



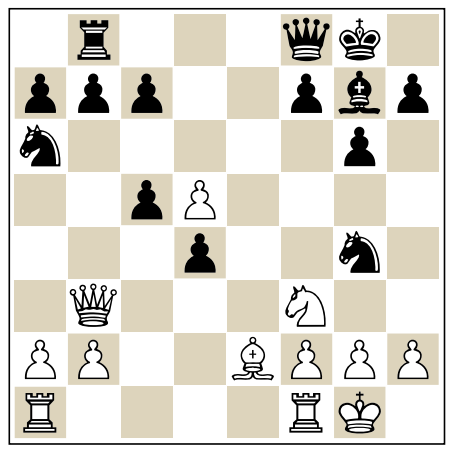
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

15...♗xd4? 16.♕xd4 ♕xe2 17.♕h8+ punishes me for displacing my king, but I missed the tricky knight move 15...♘e3!. The endgame after 16.♘e6+ ♕xe6 17.dxe6 ♘xd1 18.♖fxd1 fxe6 is pleasant for Black.

14.exd5 dxc5

A messy position. Material is roughly balanced, but the battle revolves around White's isolated queen's pawn – a weakness or a strength?

15.♕b3 ♖b8



16.♖fe1

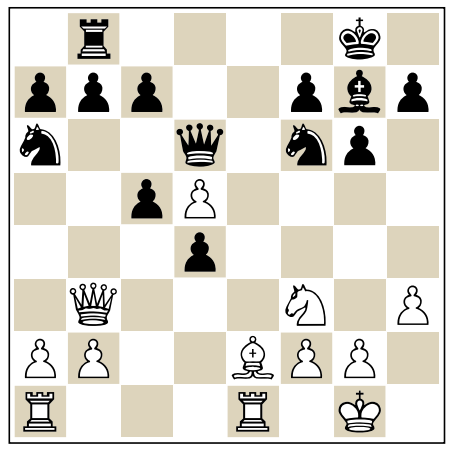
I noticed 16.♘xd4 was possible, with the idea to meet 16...♘xh2 with 17.♘e6!, when 17...♕d6 is unclear. But there is a simpler solution: 16...♗xd4! 17.♗xg4 b5!, and the strong bishop on d4 and ideas of ...c4 or ...♘b4 make life comfortable for Black.

Spoiling the pawns is tempting but bad: 16.♗xa6?! bxa6 17.♕c2 ♕d6, and the d5 pawn drops off shortly.

16...♕d6

16...b5 was a key idea which doesn't quite work here: 17.♗xb5 c6 18.♕a4! is good for White (18.dxc6 ♘c7 19.a4 a6 would have been the point).

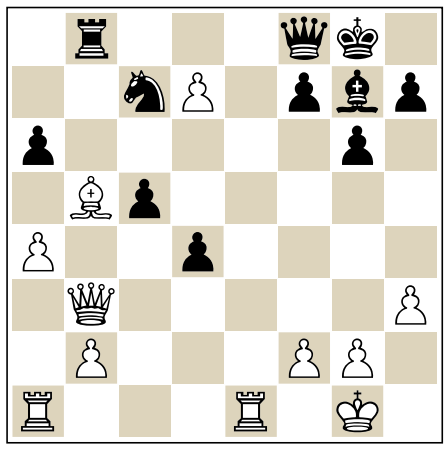
17.h3 ♘f6



18.♗xa6

This diverts the queen from the d-pawn, but solves the problem of my bad knight.

I was more worried about the complications after 18.a3!?, and now 18...b5!? was the move I was analysing at the board, using tactics to get the knight back into play: 19.♗xb5 c6 (19...♕b6!? 20.a4 ♘b4 isn't stupid, but I hadn't seen it) 20.dxc6 ♘c7 21.a4 a6 22.♘e5 ♕f8! 23.♘d7 ♘xd7 24.cxd7. I got this far, but I hadn't found the computer's move



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

24...♕d8! 25.♕g3! axb5 26.axb5, and, frankly, I still can't tell what is going on here. Either side could be better. 26...♕xd7 27.♖a7! is the idea.

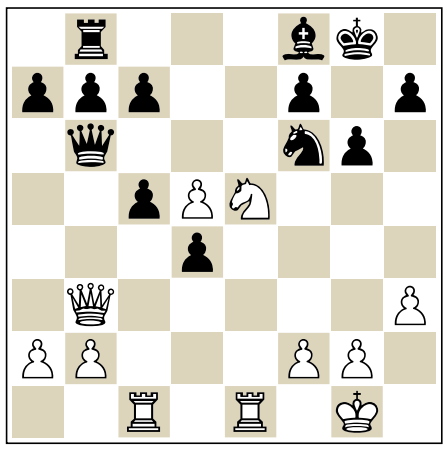
So after 18.a3 I might not have been able to resist following my own calculations, but there are several calmer ways to play, such as 18...♕b6 and ...♘e8-d6, or ...♘d7-b6, or even the immediate 18...c4!? 19.♗xc4 ♘c5, and Black recovers the d5 pawn.

18...♕xa6 19.♖ac1

It's important that 19.♘e5 ♕d6 20.♘c6? doesn't work, on account of 20...c4! 21.♕b5 a6, and Black wins.

19...♗f8 20.♘e5 ♕b6?!

It was rather careless to allow 21.d6 here. 20...♗d6!? was better, and then 21.♕f3 (21.♘d3 ♘d7 leaves White struggling for counterplay against b7-b5) 21...♗xe5 22.♖xe5 ♕d6 23.♖ce1 ♖f8!, protecting f7 in order to meet 24.♖e7 with 24...♘xd5, and Black stands well.



21.♕f3?!

Ambitious, but objectively this wasn't a great decision, as Black has enough resources to defend the kingside and can keep the advantage.

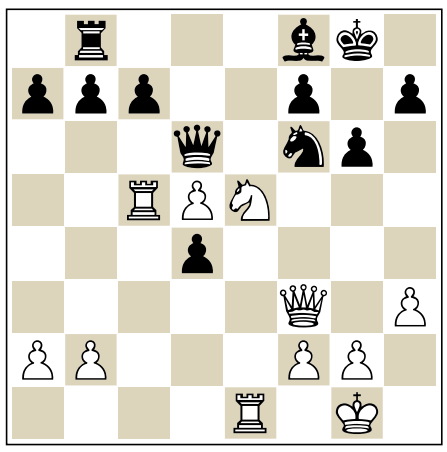
21.d6! was not a move I had noticed, actually. 21...♕xb3 22.dxc7! ♖c8 23.axb3 ♘d5!?, and now if Black had time to play a5/b6 and recapture on c7 he would still have an edge, but 24.♘d3 b6 25.b4! ♖xc7 26.♖e5 ♘f6 27.bxc5 bxc5, and with ...♗d6 coming up, Black is still doing OK but certainly can't claim an advantage.

21...♕d6 22.g4

Black was threatening ...♔g7 (to defend the ♘f6) and then ...♕xd5, so I was expecting this.

22.♘xf7? leads nowhere: 22...♔xf7 23.♖e6 ♕d8, followed by ...♔g7, and wins.

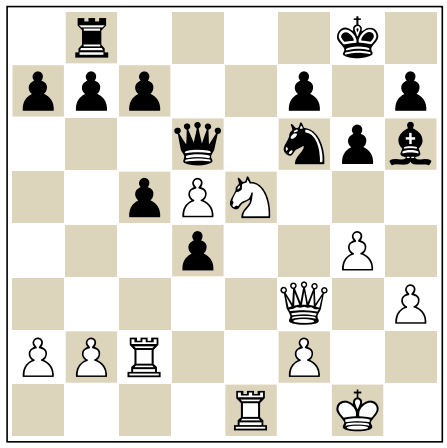
The mind does strange things when you're defending. After 22.♖xc5?



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

I was convinced that 22...♖e8! was a crucial defensive resource, leaving all White's pieces hanging. This assessment is right, but 22...♕xc5 23.♕xf6 ♕xd5! is a trivial defence. If I pointed out that 23...♕e7 24.♕xe7 ♗xe7 25.♘d7 ♗b4! (not 25...♖e8 26.♘f6+) is also quite acceptable for Black, I would only make a fool of myself.

22...♗h6 23.♖c2



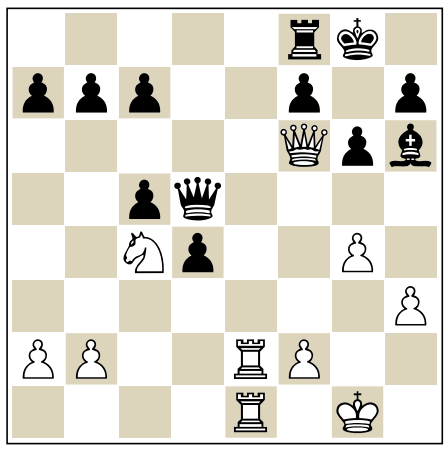
23...♖e8!

Deflecting White's rook from the c-file is an important idea.

24.♖ce2 ♖f8 With the d5 pawn about to drop, White is in trouble.

25.♘c4!? 25.♖c2!? was tricky, but Black should just play 25...b6 (25...♘xd5 26.♘c4 ♕d8 27.♘a5! is the nifty idea, as 27...b6 28.♘c6 ♕d6 29.♕xd5! wins) 26.♘c6 ♕f4, with the advantage.

25...♕xd5 26.♕xf6



26...♗g7!

At the time I wasn't sure whether this intermezzo was a good idea, but it's actually very important, even though White gains the extra option of withdrawing the queen to f4.

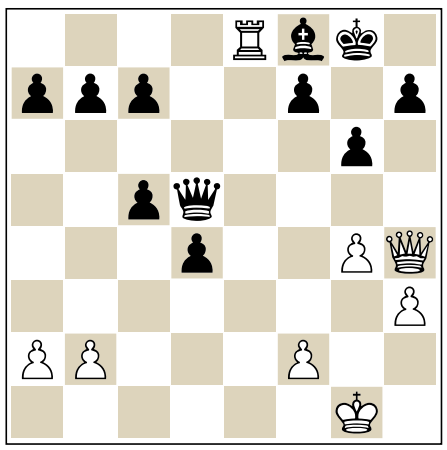
It turns out that 26...♕xc4 27.♖e8 is not just a better version for White compared with the game

– he has the advantage as well! 27...♕d5 (27...♕d3 28.♕h4! is also dangerous, e.g. 28...♕b5 29.♕d8 ♕xb2 30.♖xf8+ ♗xf8 31.♖e8 ♕c1+ 32.♔g2 ♕h6 33.♕xc7 and the pawns are dropping off, while Black remains passive) 28.♖xf8+ ♗xf8 29.♖e8, and here is the crucial difference – in the game Black could play ...♔g7 here to defend against the threat of ♕e7. 29...♕d6 30.♕xd6 cxd6 31.♖a8, and Black's queenside is in trouble.

27.♕h4

27.♕f4 ♕xc4 28.♖e8 was a decent alternative. The c7 pawn comes under attack and the d-pawn is temporarily pinned. 28...♕d5 29.♕xc7 d3 should still give Black the better chances.

27...♕xc4 28.♖e8 ♕d5 29.♖xf8+ ♗xf8 30.♖e8



30...♔g7! Stepping out of the pin solves most of the problems.

31.g5

31.♕d8 ♕xd8 32.♖xd8 a5 and b7-b6 / ♗f8-d6 covers all the pawns, so all the winning chances are with Black. White might have some chances to set up a blockade, but it's not a very pragmatic option, especially given my time-trouble.

31...♕d6 Now the check on h6 leads nowhere.

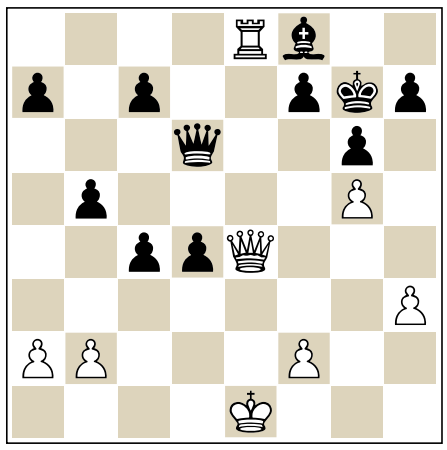
32.♔f1

I think I had about four minutes to reach the time-control, but pushing the queenside pawns was an easy plan. Nakamura had somewhat more time, but the next few moves came quickly.

32...b5 33.♔e1 c4 34.♕e4

NEW IN CHESS

First things first. At the start of the round Luke McShane ties his shoelaces. You don't want to trip up in the opening, do you?

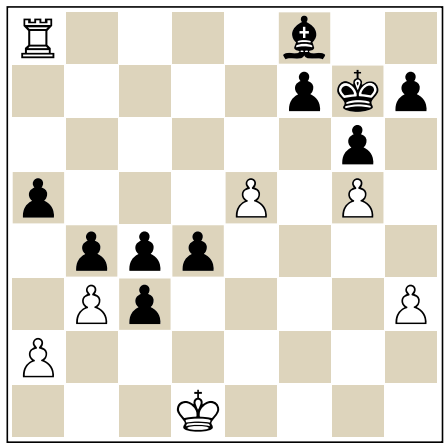


34...c5?

This natural move actually gives up a fair bit of my advantage. The pawn phalanx remains solid, but the bishop on f8 gets shut in. 34...d3! 35.♕e5+ ♕xe5+ 36.♖xe5 c6 was possible. I didn't like having all my pawns on light squares but there are important dynamic benefits, and they are not so easy to attack after all.

35.h4!?

35.f4 was another plausible try: 35...b4 36.♕e5+ ♕xe5+ 37.fxe5 heads for a kind of fortress. I think Black can break through with some beautiful ideas, although I somehow doubt that I could have found them all in three minutes: 37...c3 38.b3 c4! 39.♔d1 (39.bxc4 b3! 40.axb3 ♗b4 wins; 39.h4 a5! is similar to 39.♔d1) 39...a5! 40.♖a8

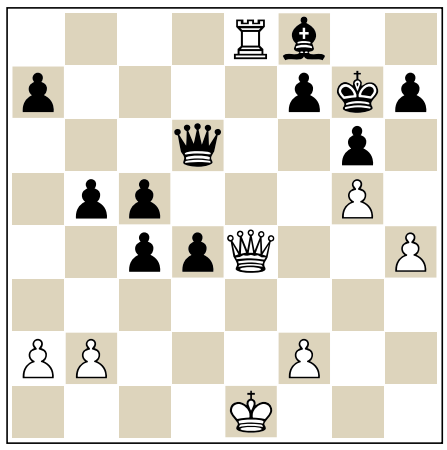


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

NEW IN CHESS

Viktor Kortchnoi (78) played his simuls in a belligerent mood, telling his opponents that they should not count on any presents and that he was ready to play till midnight.

40...a4! (an amazing idea – deflecting the rook is decisive) 41.♖xa4 d3 (♗c5-e3 is the idea, so...) 42.♖a5 ♗e7 43.h4 h6 44.bxc4 hxg5 45.♖d5 b3!, and now the bishop will control c1 from the other side – White can resign.



35...c3

The right move for the wrong reasons.

35...b4 was my first idea. 35.h4 came as a surprise to me mainly because I hadn't had time to study the position properly. I jumped to the far-fetched conclusion that he was angling for h5, followed by f4-f5-f6+ and ♕e7.

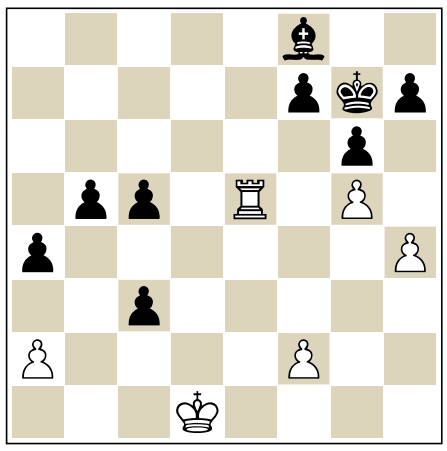
35...b4 was the move I wanted to play, as I thought it was desirable to recapture on c3 with the b-pawn, but I was worried it would give White time to execute his idea. But actually the point was 36.♕f3! (threatening 37.♕f6+) 36...♗e7 37.♕a8 ♗f8 38.♕f3, which more or less forces a draw.

So perhaps 35.♕f3 ♗e7 36.h4!? was the toughest defence after all, although Black has other options there.

36.bxc3 dxc3 37.♕e5+

White has run out of attacking ideas, so he has to seek his chances without queens.

37...♕xe5+ 38.♖xe5 a5 39.♔d1 a4



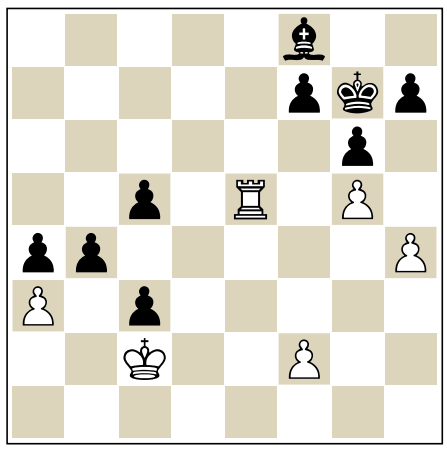
40.a3!?

A committal decision, but not a bad one I feel.

40.♔c2 b4 41.♖d5 is not obviously bad, but I can see why this didn't appeal. Black retains the option of playing ...a3 and slowly trying to create problems on the kingside. By fixing the pawn on a4, White forces Black to play with some urgency.

40...b4 41.♔c2

The time-control has been reached, and Black still has winning chances, but it's not easy to see how to continue. Furthermore, although Black is not in danger yet, the critical variations do introduce a third result – a dodgy bit of calculation could easily cost me a full point.



41...h6!

After about half an hour's thought. 41...f5 was my first in-

stinct, as it's very natural to try to bring the king over, but I realized that checks from the side would prove quite annoying. 42.♖e8 ♔f7 43.♖a8 b3+ 44.♔xc3 ♗g7+ 45.♔d2 (45.♔d3 might have been even better) 45...c4 46.♖a7+, with at least a draw.

41...h5 was my second thought (the idea being that the bishop might well grab all three pawns on the kingside later on) but then I realized that in some lines I would probably want to soften up the g5-square in order to control c1 with the bishop.

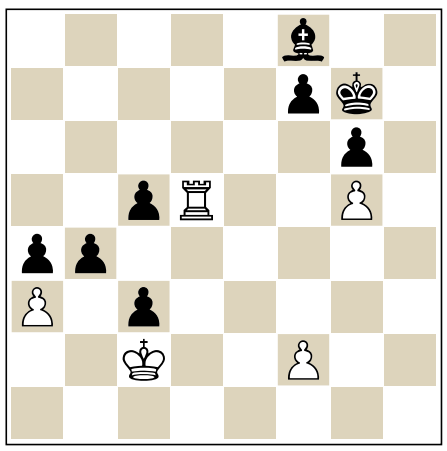
Hence 41...h6!, which also contains a well hidden idea.

42.♖d5?

I'm not exactly sure where Hikaru had miscalculated, but this move came surprisingly quickly for such a critical position, and for a while I thought it was the losing mistake.

42.♖e8 was better, and I can't find anything more than a draw: 42...hxg5 43.hxg5 ♗d6 44.♖a8 b3+ 45.♔xc3 ♗e5+ 46.♔d2 (46.♔d3 c4+! 47.♔xc4 b2 forces a pawn through, as the bishop controls b8) 46...c4 47.♖xa4 c3+ 48.♔c1 ♗d6 49.♔b1, and now White threatens 50.♖c4, so Black has to take a draw with 49...c2+ 50.♔b2 ♗e5+ 51.♔c1 ♗d6 – neither side can make progress, as the rook must guard f4 and a3.

42...hxg5 43.hxg5



43...♔h7!

Not an easy idea to spot, creating a space on g7 so that the bishop defends c3.

London 2009 — **cat. XVIII**

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		TPR
1	Magnus Carlsen	IGM	NOR	2801	*	1	½	½	1	1	½	½	13	2839
2	Vladimir Kramnik	IGM	RUS	2772	0	*	½	½	1	1	½	1	12	2787
3	David Howell	IGM	ENG	2597	½	½	*	½	½	1	½	½	9	2760
4	Michael Adams	IGM	ENG	2698	½	½	½	*	1	½	½	½	9	2746
5	Luke McShane	IGM	ENG	2615	0	0	½	0	*	0	1	1	7	2605
6	Ni Hua	IGM	CHN	2665	0	0	0	½	1	*	½	½	6	2598
7	Hikaru Nakamura	IGM	USA	2715	½	½	½	½	0	½	*	½	6	2643
8	Nigel Short	IGM	ENG	2707	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	*	5	2592

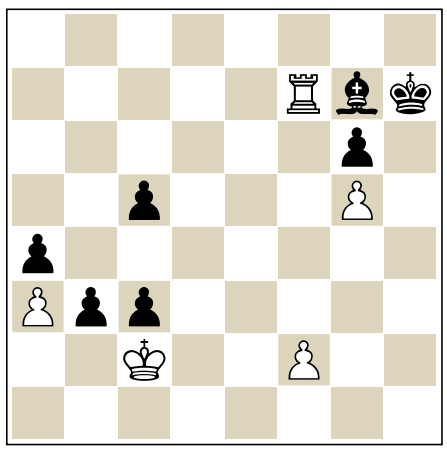
(3 points for a win)

44.♖d7?

After 44.♖d8? ♗g7 45.♖a8 b3+ 46.♔c1 ♗d4 47.♖xa4 ♔g7 the king is a move slower to reach the queenside (while keeping pawn f7) but the position is still winning.

I didn't give it serious consideration at the time, but now I think 44.axb4! was the last chance. After 44...cxb4 45.♖b5! (45.♖a5? b3+ 46.♔xc3 ♗b4+! is a vital resource – after 47.♔xb4 b2 the pawn can't be stopped) the pawns are held up for a while. 45...♔g7 46.f3, just putting the pawn on a safe square. Here I can't actually find a win, as the rook just hassles the bishop and the b4 pawn, so the ♔g7 can't get out. If I had delayed capturing on g5, there would have been the additional option to try ...h5, fixing a weakness on h4, but I'm not sure that would be enough to win either.

44...♗g7! 45.♖xf7 b3+



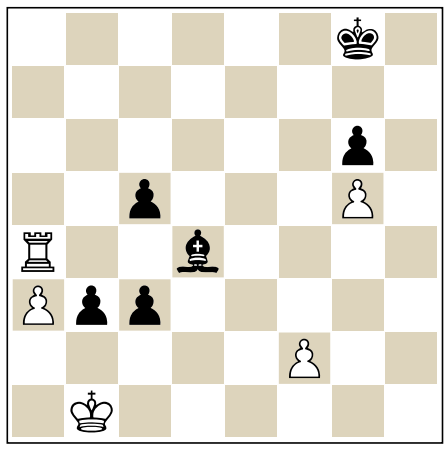
46.♔b1

At the time I was convinced that the correct follow-up was totally dependent on where he puts the king. If 46.♔c1 ♔g8 47.♖a7 ♗d4 48.♖xa4 ♔f7! wins just as in the game.

46...♔g8

Another plausible idea I had considered a few moves ago really does lose: 46...c4?? 47.♖a7 c2+ (cleverly exploiting the position of the king on b1 to gain a tempo and lose the game) 48.♔c1 c3 49.♖xa4 ♗f8, which was tempting, as White is in a mating net, but after 50.♖b4! ♗xb4 51.axb4 it's Black that can resign.

47.♖a7 ♗d4! 48.♖xa4



48...♔f7!

With the reinforcements finally arriving it's all over.

49.♖a6

49.♖xd4 cxd4 50.a4 d3 wins.

49...♗e5! Using the f4-square.

50.♖a4 ♔e6 51.♖h4 ♔d5 52.a4 c4 53.♖h1 c2+ 54.♔c1 c3 55.♖h4

55.♖h3 ♗f4+ 56.♖e3 ♗xe3+ 57.fxe3 ♔e4 58.a5 ♔d3 59.a6 b2 mate!

55...♗d6

A pretty finish. White resigned.

A Country for Old Men

Misha Savinov

Early in 2010 the skiing world watches the one and only skiing tour called Tour de Ski – a gruelling competition modelled on the Tour de France, the most prestigious cycling competition. Many top skiers participate in the tour, despite the event being really extreme compared to regular races. Money? Well, top sportsmen aren't motivated by money. They need to feel the challenge, or see the prestige. With the Tour they feel that their sport is developing into the right direction, and they are proud to be a part of it.

I have no idea how the skiers themselves rate a victory in the Tour. For a keen Eurosport channel fan like me, however, overcoming the distance, tiredness, and the world's strongest opposition during the Tour de Ski looks a lot more impressive than winning a single race at the Olympics. Living a perfect day is certainly a skill, but having a perfect week requires a lot more.

Quite differently from skiing, the most prestigious chess competitions of the 21st century often create a rather resort-like impression. Luxury hotels, invited guests, a relaxed atmosphere of mutual friendship and brotherhood, obliging organizers, roughly one-week schedules... The latest trend is something I especially fail to understand. Four guys competing for the Grand Slam. Six players in Nanjing. In Sofia... Maybe I am just spoiled by Bronstein books and giant Soviet Championships, but I'd rather take a bigger dish.

Think about a Eurosport fan suddenly stepping into chess. What he would consider a real world championship, a true test of skill, stamina, nerves, and will: a short match with scheduled breaks every two days, or a one-month knock-out tournament, where each mistake can be decisive and everybody seems to have a shot? Am I the only one who thinks that 12-game title matches twist the very idea of man-to-man competition? Recall your favourite chess rivalries: would it be Kasparov-Karpov, Karpov-Kortchnoi, Alekhine-Capablanca, or Lasker-Schlechter, or Kramnik-Leko? If you play for the chess crown, and your opponent is a big player, you cannot prove your superiority in a dozen games. Whatever the result you get, it would be just variance, using a poker term well-known to many chess players these days. Take the distance out of the equation, and the winner is determined by luck, not skill. I don't believe such a development is good for chess.

The FIDE Knock Out Circus has certainly lost some of its appeal after being stripped of the 'World

Life can be lonely at the top. In an empty hall Boris Gelfand is about to achieve one the finest results in his career.

Championship' tag. However, the World Cup as we know it remains the most *sporting* chess event in the calendar. One month, one winner, and everyone can qualify. Only a grand open tournament can be more democratic.

It is a strange mixture. Short matches supposedly involve an enormous amount of luck. Yet, as the players proceed further, the lucky ones fall, and the skilled ones advance. The distance begins to take over. It took 480 games to determine the winner, and the winner had to play 25 games in less than two weeks. I believe the Khanty-Mansiysk tournament and its heroes deserve a lot of love from the chess world. And its winner Boris Gelfand should receive the highest acclaim. He won a marathon. Think about it.

In case you didn't know, the Khanty-Mansiysk World Cup opened the 2011 world championship cycle. World Cup winner Boris Gelfand qualified for the Candidates'... um, competition. Matches? Perhaps, but you can never be sure until they start playing. In any event, Gelfand grabbed his chance to challenge for the chess crown again.

The participants of this World Cup had a rare and not very pleasant opportunity to test Siberian frost. The 2007 World Cup's occasional –20 C was remembered nostalgically. This year –30 C was not uncommon, and at times the thermometer showed –40 C. No doubt that the players suffered from such conditions. Mind you, even skiers wouldn't be happy with it! The last non-Russian-speaking participant was knocked out before the quarter-finals. I don't insist it is necessary to be frost-resistant to challenge Anand/Topalov, but it certainly won't hurt. Young and promising chess players are particularly encouraged to develop this ability. Khanty-Mansiysk is going to host the next Chess Olympiad, and who knows what else.

Apart from the weather conditions, the changes were minimal. The players lived in several hotels in different parts of the city, and played in the gorgeous Centre of Arts. There were, however, some little differences, using Vincent Vega's vocabulary. The journalists enjoyed free tea, coffee, and pastry (the assortment was different each day). In exchange, the press workers had to pass a sniffing test of security dog Lisa, which examined them for explosives as a part of the global anti-terror plot. A big chess tournament is obviously one of the most desired terrorist targets, but Lisa did its job well.

The daily routine of the event was organized quite well, but I should mention a peculiar feature

of this place – a total, defiant lack of onlookers in the playing hall.

Maybe the people of Khanty-Mansiysk simply hate chess? Negative. Outside the playing hall there were many chess boards, which never remained unused. Young, old, and middle-aged men, women, and security guards enthusiastically played for hours while the great players created their masterpieces within their direct reach. The talkative Sergey Shipov, who commented on the most interesting games live for the audience, also gathered far bigger crowds than the genuine World Cup participants. I actually had nothing against seeing the empty playing hall, because it confirmed several theories I am attracted to.

1. Chess is a lot like jazz: there is much greater pleasure in playing jazz than in listening to it.

2. Siberian people have greater inner freedom than people from other parts of Russia, so they just enjoy the event, and neither care about tradition nor worship the participants.

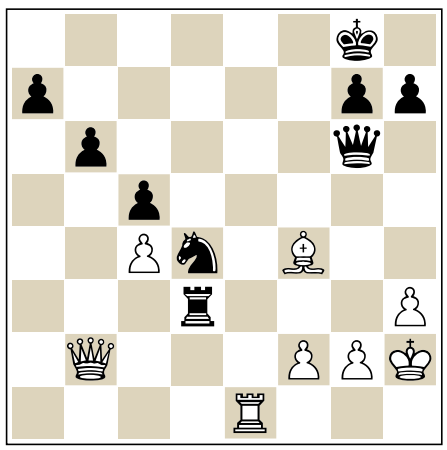
3. Looking at chess players making one move in 10 minutes is just as exciting as watching grass growing, and cannot be recommended without powerful multimedia support. Radio commentary should do the job, and it wasn't provided in Khanty-Mansiysk.

4. Classical chess is played for history rather than for the present.

Round 1

The difference in Elo weight in the first round was too big to trouble the favourites. Only one of them went down in flames – Sergey '2718' Movsesian lost to Yu Yangyi. However, losing to a young Chinese player should no longer qualify as sensational.

One of the most splendid tactical blows was delivered in Morovic-Rublevsky.



Morovic-Rublevsky (1.1)
position after 39.♖e1

Morovic had just rejected a rook trade and played 39.♖e3-e1?. He was severely punished by Rublevsky, who demonstrated remarkable alertness.

39...♖xh3+! White resigned in view of 40.♔xh3 ♕h5+ and 41...♘f5, mate, or 40.gxh3 ♘f3+, etc. Simple, yet quite nice.

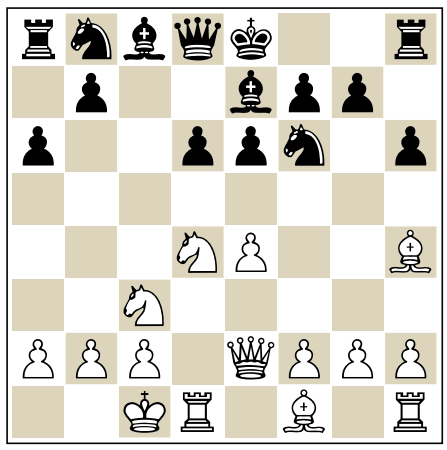
All local players (except, of course, Dmitry Yakovenko, who, despite living in Moscow, represents the Khanty-Mansiysk autonomous region) were duly eliminated in the first round. However, the strongest of them, IM Alexey Pridorozhny, could actually have done better. A known (and feared) speed player, he offered his opponent Evgeny Alekseev a draw on the 11th move in the first game, and then successfully defended in the second one until the very end. However, having reached a drawn ending, he put his knight en prise on the 39th move.

One of the headliners of the day was the following brief clash.

SI 4.2 – B95
Alex Shabalov
Vladimir Baklan
Khanty-Mansiysk 2009 (1.8)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.♕e2 This queen manoeuvre is often used in various Sicilian variations by players originating from Riga. However, in this particular position the Ukrainian grandmaster, who is a very original player, found a resource which gave him a win in five more moves.

7...h6 8.♗h4 ♗e7 9.0-0-0



ILYA ODESSKY

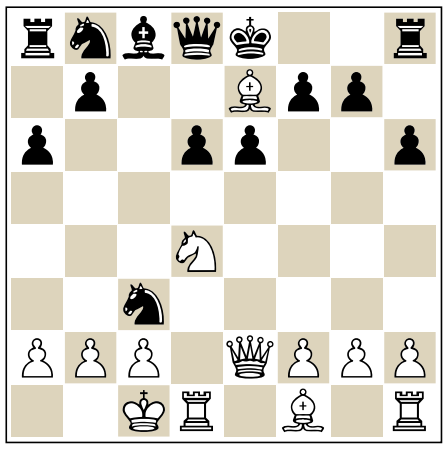
'The talkative Sergey Shipov, who commented on the most interesting games live for the audience, gathered far bigger "crowds" than the World Cup participants.'

9...♘xe4! Bang! This should equalize the game.

10.♗xe7

In the next White game Shaba invented the stunning 10.♘xe4 ♗xh4 11.♘xe6!?, but after 11...♗xe6 12.♘xd6+ ♔f8 13.♘xf7 ♗g5+! 14.♔b1 ♔xf7! Baklan got sufficient material compensation for his queen and eventually drew the game.

10...♘xc3



11.♕c4?

Shabalov rejects the drawish 11.♗xd8 ♘xe2+ 12.♘xe2 ♔xd8 13.♖xd6+ ♔c7, but commits a fatal mistake.

11...♘xa2+! 12.♕xa2 ♕xe7

And White just resigned.

Round 2

The second round brought three major setbacks, and could easily have brought four. However, Boris Gelfand proved luckier than Teimour Radjabov, Alexander Morozevich, and Vasily Ivanchuk, and, as you know, took his sudden chance very responsibly...

I don't think there is a better way to describe the two games between Vasily Ivanchuk and Wesley So rather than by passing the microphone to the Ukrainian super-grandmaster.

'I committed chess suicide. In the first game all went OK, I was almost sure that I was winning! And then... then, I just went crazy,' said Ivanchuk at the same press-conference.

A few minutes later he announced the end of his chess career! 'I should leave professional chess. Chess will become a hobby for me from now on... Chess is killing me. Chess is destroying me!'

Luckily for all chess fans, Vasily cooled down, and in a couple of days he wrote an open letter retracting his decision.

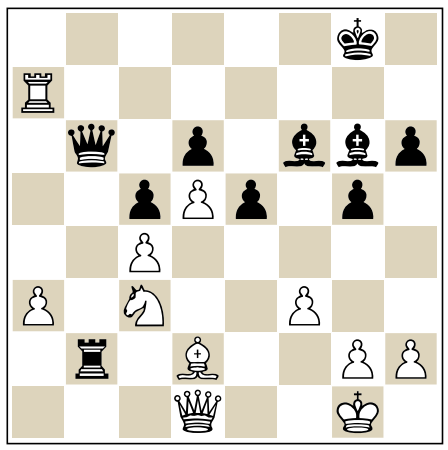
ILYA ODESSKY

Dejected after his sensational loss to Wesley So, an emotional Vasily Ivanchuk briefly considered giving up professional chess.

Radjabov and Morozevich were less emotional after their defeats. Radjabov lost to Konstantin Sakaev, who had a dubious position in the King's Indian as White, but then reacted splendidly to his opponent's mistake and quickly crushed Teimour. The Azerbaijani grandmaster tried to squeeze a win out of a better rook ending in the next game, and came quite close. Sakaev defended well up to a certain point, but then cracked, allowing White the winning break on the 53rd move. However, Radjabov missed his chance, and Black survived.

Morozevich also took his first step towards the Khanty-Mansiysk airport in the first game, losing as White to Viktor Laznicka. Just like Ivanchuk and Radjabov, the Muscovite could make a comeback the next day, but missed the best continuation and blew the game in a few moves. Laznicka wasn't even interested in giving his opponent a consolation draw, and smoothly proceeded to a 2-0 score.

Let us, however, turn to a game that could have changed the course of the 2009 World Cup completely. A pitched battle between Boris Gelfand and Farrukh Amonatov could have come to an abrupt end...



Gelfand-Amonatov (2.2)
position after Black's 31...♗xf6

Gelfand stands better, but must play very energetically. He obliges.

32.♕a4!

The bishop is left unprotected, but after 32...♖xd2 33.♖a8+ ♔h7 34.♕d7+ ♗g7 35.♖a7 Black would have to part with the queen. Therefore Amonatov retreats and

prepares to defend. **32...♕d8 33. ♘e4 ♗xe4 34.fxe4 ♖b1+ 35.♔f2 ♕f8 36.♖a8?**

After 36.♔g3! White wins.

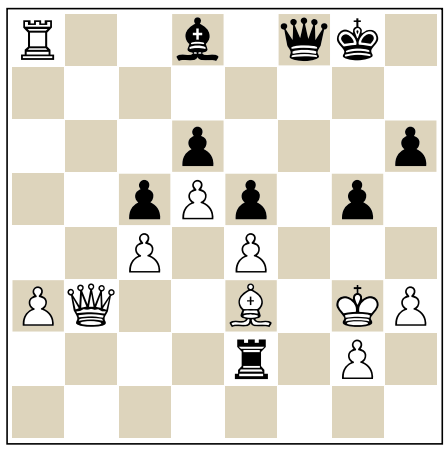
36...♗d8+! 37.♔g3?

The game ends in a draw after 37.♔e2 ♕f1+ 38.♔e3 ♕g1+ 39.♔d3 ♕d4+ 40.♔e2 ♕xe4+ 41.♔f2. Gelfand, who was winning just a couple of moves back, naturally avoids this continuation, but he overlooks that the situation has changed drastically.

37...♖f1! 38.♗e3 ♖e1! 39.♕b3 ♖e2

With his last few moves Amonatov has gained a decisive advantage. White's king is in great danger. However, the dreaded control move spoiled everything.

40.h3



40...♕f1?

If Amonatov had gone for 40...♔g7, the World Cup would have had a different winner.

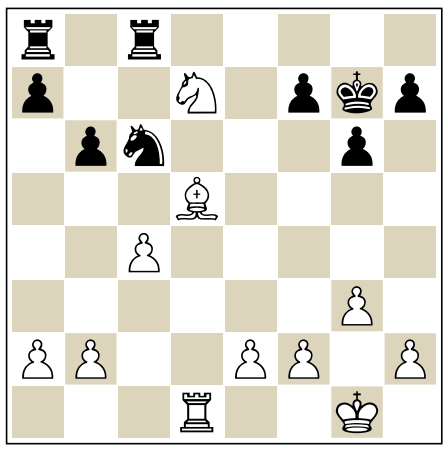
41.♖xd8+

Oops! Here Black suddenly discovered 41...♔g7 42.♕b7+ ♔g6 43.♖g8+ ♔h5 44.♖xg5+! hxg5 45.♕h7 mate, and gave up.

Round 3

At this stage we said good-bye to the 2007 World Cup winner Gata Kamsky. Without the help of Emil Sutovsky the American failed to equalize as White against Wesley So's French Defence (see So's notes to this upset in the games section). In the return game Kamsky never had a chance, so the young Philippine player shot another sheriff. This was his last success in Khanty-Mansiysk, but one that will be remembered for years.

The round was rich in enigmatic winning moves.



Gelfand-Polgar (3.1)
position after 25...♖fc8

Gelfand finds the perfect way to increase his advantage.

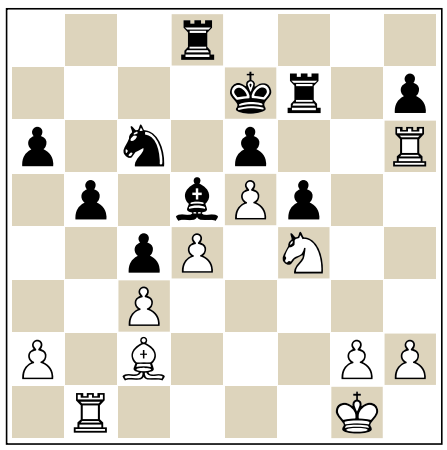
26.♖b1!!

Prophylaxis against the pin on the d-file and preparing the b2-b4-b5 march at the same time. One cannot ask more from one move. Rybka also considers this manoeuvre to be the best, and, moreover, the only real attempt to play for a win.

26...♖c7 27.♘e5 ♘xe5 28.♗xa8 ♖xc4 29.♗d5 ♖c2 30.♔f1 g5 31. ♗b3 ♖d2 32.♔e1 ♖d7

And Gelfand won on the 62nd move.

However, I feel Dmitry Yakovenko's 29th move against Alexander Areschenko created a stronger artistic impression.



Yakovenko-Areschenko (3.1)
position after 28...♘c6

29.♗d1!

After this short backward move Black... resigned. The ruthless logic of chess sometimes creates really beautiful patterns.

The third round was overall quite eventful. One recalls a huge fight between Peter Svidler and Arkady Naiditsch, when the Russian managed to win on demand as Black, playing the scheme of his teenage years 1...g6, 2...♗g7, 3...d6, 4...a6, 5...h6, 6...b5, etc. Also there was Karjakin's comeback against Navara – the new Russian hopelessly lost the first game and confidently tied the score in the second one. However, the key issue of this stage of the tournament had nothing to do with the game of chess.

Do human beings have an inner and objective understanding of justice? Probably not. By comparing moral values of different ethnic groups we can't find universally accepted values, and hence 'inner understanding of justice' is merely an illusion. Yet as long as this illusion affects our lives, it becomes reality.

I was a big basketball fan until 1995. I guess our readers from Lithuania can understand why. Others should refer to Wikipedia (see *Eurobasket 1995*). After that final I was unable to watch basketball games for several years, because I couldn't accept the fact that an incompetent or biased referee can do literally anything he wants on the court. Since that time the very idea of a clueless person deciding the outcome of a sporting event seemed so unjust to me that in a way it undermined the legitimacy of any sport that lacks objective criteria. To make a long story short, I have always liked the fact that chess referees are mere scoresheet signers, no more. But some of them clearly want more power.

ILYA ODESSKY

Where there is smoke... Chinese GMs Li Chao and Wang Yue were forfeited when they arrived two minutes late for the second tie-break game of Round 3.

I have heard about a Russian arbiter who forfeited a game, because he *suspected* they were cheating (i.e., one player lost on purpose). #&@! I mean, do you seriously want them to use this power? To use it legally? Please, count me out, then.

Now this rule about coming late to the game. About 95 per cent of the players use only one adjective to describe it – 'idiotic'. The rule makes no sense, because the late-coming player already punishes himself by coming late to the game – he loses time on the clock. This is especially true in rapid games. And yet, it was 1) accepted, and, 2) much worse, implemented! Recently, it was the young Russian player Valentina Gunina who came a few seconds late to her game in a team event, and was forfeited by the Chinese referee. And in Khanty-Mansiysk two Chinese grandmasters lost their games by default only because they were two minutes late for the second round of the rapid.

Of course, the chess players are largely responsible. They never raise their voices collectively against anything wrong coming from FIDE. They never really protest even if they don't like it. Well, don't complain then when someday you won't be able to pick up a blundered piece without both you and your opponent being disqualified for cheating, only because an arbiter didn't like the colour of your hair.

Back to Khanty-Mansiysk. The first tie-break games were scheduled for 3 p.m. local time. The second tie-break games can start at any time. They aren't scheduled, because the time-control contains bonus seconds. Stick around, guys, just stick around.

After the last first-round game had ended, the chief arbiter, Ashot Vardapetian (who, by the way, has done a great job at the Aeroflot Open for many years) took the microphone and announced: 'Ten minutes to the next round!' Then he announces five minutes to the start, two minutes, one... That should have been enough to wake up the player, if...

Right. If they had a relaxation room. But they didn't. They just wandered around the venue to relax, and used their best guess to predict when they should come back.

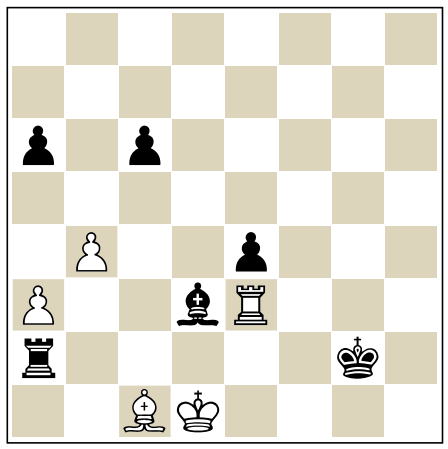
The Chinese players missed their games because they were smoking. Late by two minutes, they were forfeited in the second round and then, completely shaken, lost in the third round without a fight. Gashimov and Bacrot got a free ride.

'I was shocked. It seemed that the world had stopped,' said Wang Yue. 'Yes, the decision was correct, according to the rules. The only decision that could be taken. But to my mind it was not fair.'

You were warned, guys...

Round 4

Tiredness began to add up quickly. Many 4th round games were decided by blunders. Some of them were just incomprehensible.



Yakovenko-Grischuk (4.8)
position after 56.♔d1

Black to move in a critical tie-break game. What can you do to a chess player to make him overlook 56...♔f2 in this position? And what can you do to a 2700+ chess player? Just make him run a marathon...

56...♖a1 57.♔d2 ♖a2+ 58.♔d1

Here is another chance to play 58...♔f2. But...

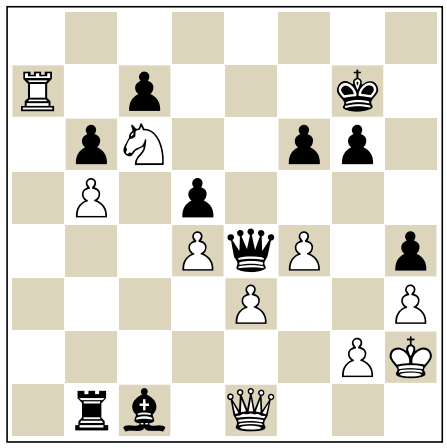
58...♖f2 59.♗d2 ♖f5 60.♗e1 ♖d5 61.♔d2 ♖d4 62.♖g3+ ♔f1 63.♔e3! ♖d5 64.♗f2!

And White delivers mate. Grischuk resigned.

Shirov also made a mistake against Svidler in the first game, and instead of playing with an extra

pawn, was down two pawns with only a ghost of an attack. Having won as Black, Peter flawlessly advanced to the quarter-final.

The finest game was played by Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, who outplayed Laznicka with black and sacrificed his queen a few times.



Laznicka-Mamedyarov (4.1)
position after 43.♖a7

43...♕xf4+! 44.♔h1

Of course, White is crushed after 44.exf4 ♗xf4+.

44...♕f2!?

Playing for the crowd (on the Internet!). After 45.♕xf2 ♗xe3+ 46.♔h2 ♗xf2 Black wins.

45.♖xc7+ ♔h6 46.♕d1 ♕e2!? 47.♕g1 ♕xe3 48.♕f1 ♕f4 49.♕d3 ♖a1

And White succumbed to his fate. Curiously, in the next game the Czech accepted a draw offer on the 13th move. He didn't have the willpower to keep running... And as for Mamedyarov – Shakh won his fourth match without playing a single tie-break! Kosteniuk and Milov were defeated 2-0, Wang Hao and Laznicka managed to get half a point.

Sergey Karjakin overcame Nikita Vitiugov (the latter blundered in an equal position). Vladimir Malakhov crushed Wesley So in the rapid games (3-0). Boris Gelfand had the initiative during the whole match against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, could have won already in the first classical game, but defeated the Frenchman only in the last rapid match-up. Finally, Vugar Gashimov, the World's quiet number 5, broke through Fabiano Caruana – also in a tie-break, but pretty convincingly – 2½-½. Thus the quarter-finals were determined:

Karjakin-Mamedyarov
Gelfand-Yakovenko
Svidler-Malakhov
Ponomariov-Gashimov.

Round 5

All these players are well-known to chess fans. The least famous is Russian grandmaster Vladimir Malakhov, so I guess it won't hurt if I introduce him briefly to the audience. Vladimir is 29, he has been rated well above 2650 for many years, and combines professional chess with a serious scientific career – he is a researcher in a physics institute in the Moscow Region. Malakhov's main competitive achievements are playing in the Candidates' matches for Mexico 2007 (defeated by Grischuk) and finishing second in the individual European championship in 2003. His semi-professional attitude to chess was strikingly revealed during the latter event, when he allowed his opponent, Zurab Azmaiparashvili, to take back a losing move (Azmaiparashvili eventually won the championship). Malakhov appears to be a very unassuming, modest person – a typical Soviet intellectual of the 80s, who prefers good personal relations and self-realization in his areas of interest to money or career success. He has a very characteristic style of play with heavy emphasize on slow middlegame manoeuvering and an impeccable endgame technique. Malakhov's main drawback is his limited opening repertoire. His balanced personality and very pragmatic style of play gave Vladimir a smooth path to the quarter-final. He didn't lose a single game along the way, and showed remarkable ability in rapid chess, beating Smirin, Eljanov and So with the score of 8½-½!

Malakhov's opponent in the quarters was Peter Svidler. Of course, the Petersburger was the favourite in this match-up. However...

Prior to the quarter-final I had the chance to discuss the World Cup action with a man who had played at the highest level for many

ILYA ODESSKY

With the help of Yury Dokhoian and Alexander Motylev, 'new Russian' Sergey Karjakin reached the semi-finals of the World Cup.

years. He didn't want to be quoted, so I won't reveal his name, but I think his view of the players' chances at that time is very interesting.

He wasn't impressed by Mamedyarov and Gashimov, and confidently said that Karjakin and Ponomariov should pass them without extraordinary effort. Karjakin, in his opinion, was the main favourite of the World Cup, judging by sheer quality of preparation and play. He liked Gelfand's play in Khanty-Mansiysk but was unsure whether a 41-year-old can win such a tournament – ability to recuperate was even more important at that stage than chess skill. As for Svidler – after all due compliments to Peter, he pointed out that the Petersburger has a black-out day at every tournament, and knock-out events cannot be won without maintaining a certain level. Neither chess talent, nor willpower (Peter made a couple of excellent comebacks along the way) can substitute for occasional blow-ups.

Now see what happened in the first game between Svidler and Malakhov.

NOTES BY
Max Notkin

SL 3.1 – D15
Peter Svidler
Vladimir Malakhov
Khanty-Mansiysk 2009 (5.1)

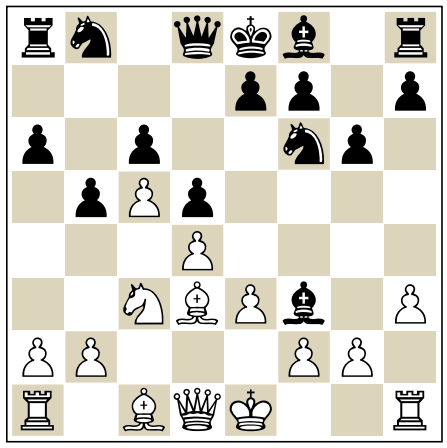
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 a6 5.e3 b5 6.c5 g6 7.♗d3

The line 7.♘e5 ♗g7 8.f4 was heavily tested by Malakhov in Khanty-Mansiysk. He played it three times against Eljanov with black and once against So with white, scoring 3 points.

7...♗g4

Black normally refrains from this move if ...g6 has been played, preferring 7...♗g7.

8.h3 ♗xf3



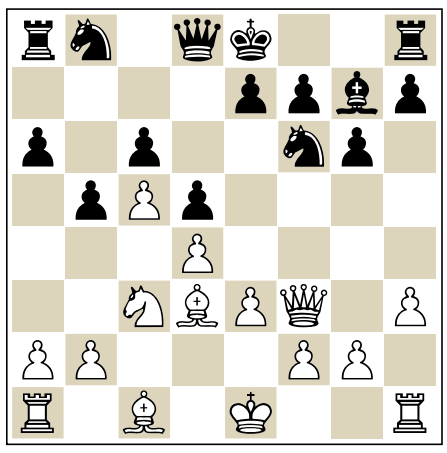
9.♕xf3

Three years ago, commenting on Ponomariov-Grischuk, Tal Memorial, Moscow 2006, Dmitry Yakovenko opined that it's not easy for Black to achieve equality after 9.gxf3 ♘bd7 10.f4. That game continued 10...a5 (10...e6, played in Gelfand-Anand, Moscow blitz 2007, looks more to the point, although later on Anand found himself in trouble as well) 11.f5 gxf5 12.♗xf5 e6 13.♗c2 e5 14.♕f3 ♗h6 15.♗d2, and White got a slight advantage that increased after the second-rate 15...exd4 16.exd4 ♕e7+ 17.♗e3 ♗xe3 18.fxe3.

9...♗g7

Careful preparation of the e-pawn's advance with 9...♘bd7 10.0-0 e5?! allows White to exploit his advantage in development with 11.e4! exd4 12.exd5 dxc3 13.♖e1+ ♗e7 14.d6.

But it is possible to play 9...e5!? without any preparation. After 10.dxe5 (10.♕g3 ♘bd7 11.dxe5?! ♘h5 12.♕h2 ♗g7) 10...♘fd7 11.♕g3 ♗g7 12.f4 ♘xc5 13.♗c2 0-0 a double-edged position arises.



10.g4!?

A new move in an almost unknown position.

10...e5!?

Black rejected the idea of the simple 10...0-0, only to revisit it on move 20 in a less favourable situation. There's nothing wrong with the text, however.

11.♕g3

11.dxe5? ♘fd7 is just bad for White.

11...♘fd7

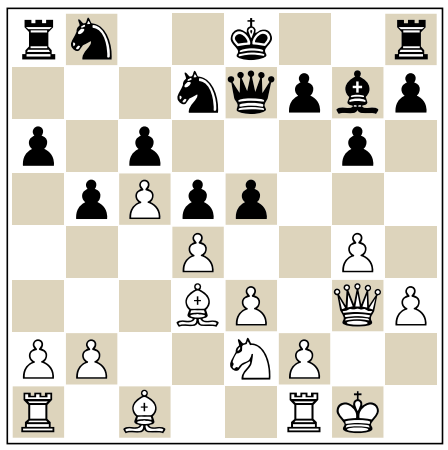
Black's options are many. He may maintain the tension or he may release it.

In the latter case, 11...e4 12.♗c2 favours White, who will undermine the enemy centre by f2-f3 at some point; while 11...exd4 12.exd4 0-0, followed by ...♖e8, ...b4, ...♘e4 or ...♘d7-f8-e6, is playable for Black.

If Black protects the e-pawn with 11...♘bd7 he will be forced to meet 12.dxe5 with the unappetizing 12...♘g8, although even here, the position is far from clear.

Simpler is 11...♕e7, which preserves the harmony of Black's set-up.

12.♘e2 ♕e7 13.0-0



13...h5!?

To 13...0-0 White replies with the thematic 14.a4, exerting pressure on his opponent's queenside, and after 14...b4 (...bxa4 is always a concession) 15.a5, with the idea of ♖a4 and ♗d2, Black runs the risk of losing the b-pawn without compensation. Therefore Malakhov tries to unbalance the posi-

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tion, seeking counterplay on the kingside.

14.f3!

Intending to recapture on g4 with the f-pawn.

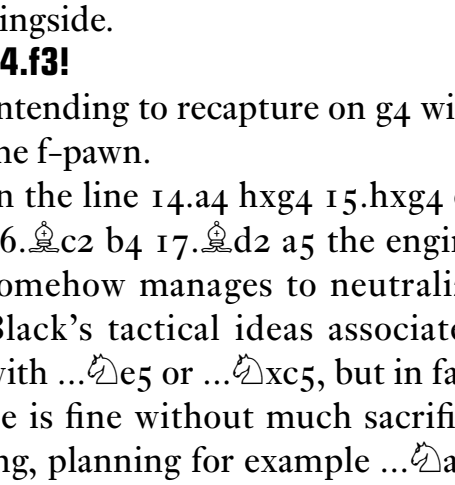
In the line 14.a4 hxg4 15.hxg4 e4 16.♗c2 b4 17.♗d2 a5 the engine somehow manages to neutralize Black's tactical ideas associated with ...♘e5 or ...♘xc5, but in fact he is fine without much sacrificing, planning for example ...♘a6, ...0-0-0, ...♘c7.

14...♘f8!

From e6 the knight threatens the d-pawn and also glances at the kingside.

15.a4 b4 16.♗d2

The straight and greedy 16.a5 ♘bd7 17.♖a4 allows Black to seize the initiative by 17...♘e6 18.♖xb4 hxg4 19.hxg4 (19.fxg4 ♘g5 20.h4 ♖xh4) 19...exd4 20.exd4 ♘exc5!. White could have gone 16.e4 right away, but after 16...♘e6 he wouldn't really have anything better than 17.♗d2, as he needs his rooks to be connected for the central clash.



16...a5?!

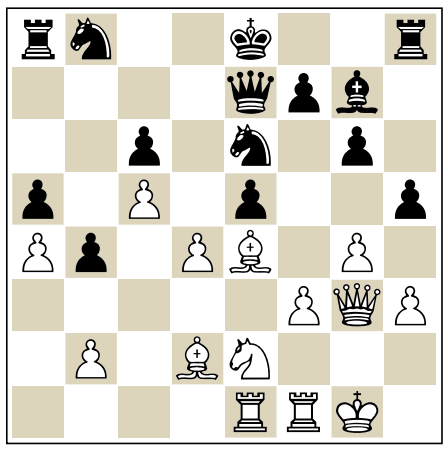
Too cool to be true. In a situation in which White is almost fully mobilized while Black's king is still in the centre and the majority of his pieces are warming up on the back rank, a more vigorous approach was required.

Stronger was 16...♘e6! 17.♔g2 (17.♗xb4 hxg4 18.hxg4 ♘g5 gives Black sufficient counterplay; 17.e4 is critical, but the position with the knight on e6 surely promises Black more than the one with the knight on f8) 17...a5 18.e4, and it's not clear whether White has improved the position of his king, while the black knight again certainly should be on e6.

17.e4 dxe4

With the a-pawn no longer controlling the b5-square, 17...♘e6? is bad in view of 18.exd5 cxd5 19.♗b5+.

18.♗xe4 ♘e6 19.♖ae1



Everything is ready for the advance of the f-pawn.

19...h4

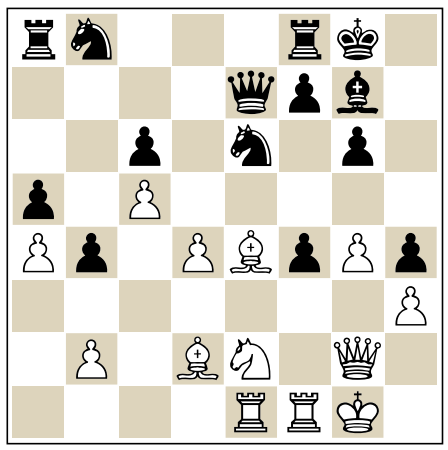
It's closing time on the kingside. Black finally decides to castle.

Nice tactical variations arise after 19...exd4, when the opening of the e-file proves fatal for Black, e.g. 20.♘f4 ♗e5 21.♗xg6! ♘d7 (21...♗xf4 22.♗xf4 fxg6 23.♗d6! ♕f6 24.♖xe6+ ♕xe6 25.♖e1, and wins) 22.♖xe5! ♘xe5 23.♘xe6 ♕xe6 (more tenacious is 23...♘xg6 24.♘c7+ ♔d7 25.♘xa8 ♖xa8 26.gxh5, with an extra pawn for White) 24.♗f5! (an essential intermediate move; the natural 24.♖e1? runs into the insidious 24...0-0-0! 25.♗b1 – in case of 25.♗f5 ♕xf5 26.gxf5 ♖dg8 White is unable to keep the material balance; after 27.♔h2 ♖xg3 28.♔xg3 ♖g8+ the knight fork yields Black the exchange – 25...f6 26.f4 hxg4 27.fxe5 ♖xh3, and Black is on top) 24...h4 25.♕e1 ♕e7 26.♕e4!, followed by 27.f4, and White is winning.

19...hxg4 is worth considering, when White retains better chances by 20.fxg4 (at the end of the line 20.hxg4 exd4 21.♘f4 ♗e5 22.♗xg6 ♘d7 23.♖xe5 ♘xe5 24.♘xe6 ♘xg6! 25.♘c7+ ♔d7 26.♘xa8 ♖xa8 White doesn't win a pawn, as was the case after the immediate 19...exd4, and now it is Black who can claim an advantage) 20...0-0 (the queen exchange 20...♕h4 21.♕xh4 ♖xh4 22.♔g2 brings no relief at all) 21.h4 exd4 22.♘f4 ♕c7 23.♗xg6! ♘d7 24.♗f5 ♘dxc5 25.g5, with menacing pressure.

20.♕f2

20.♕g2!? has its merits, but Black's best defensive line is the same as after 20.♕f2, and it allows him to hold. Our silicon friend points out an interesting option after 20...0-0 21.f4 exf4 (the aforementioned defence lies in 21...f5 and if 22.♗xc6 ♘xc6 23.♕xc6 ♖ac8 24.♕d5 ♖fd8 25.♕c4 exd4 26.♘c1 ♖c6 27.♘b3 ♕f7 28.♘xa5 ♖xc5 Black survives).



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Here 22.♔h1 suggests itself, anticipating the capture on d4, with check, and 22...g5 would be strongly met with a piece sacrifice: 23.♘xf4! gxf4 24.♗xf4 ♘xf4 25.♖xf4, with good attacking prospects.

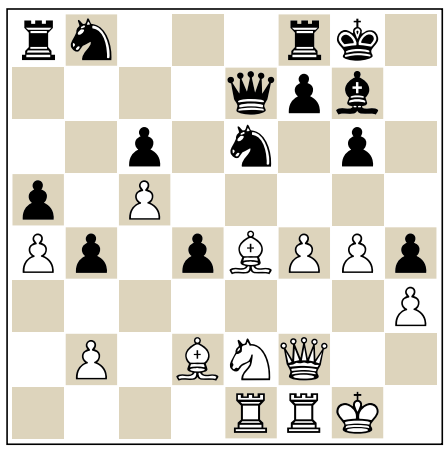
In case of 22.♘xf4 ♘xf4 23.♗xf4 ♗xd4+ 24.♔h1 ♕xc5 or 22.♗xf4 ♘xf4 23.♘xf4 ♗xd4+ 24.♔h1 ♕xc5 25.♗xg6!? fxg6 26.♘e6 ♖xf1+ 27.♖xf1 ♕e5 28.♖f8+ ♔h7 29.♖f7+ ♔g8 White's compensation is only enough for mere equality.

20...0-0 21.f4 exd4?!

21...exf4?! 22.♗xf4 isn't advisable now, as the d-pawn is protected.

The capture of the other pawn is also dubious, but it provoked excessive activity from White's side and thus shouldn't be disapproved.

Nevertheless, chess-wise 21...f5 is better, when after 22.♗c2 e4 23.♔h2 ♘a6 24.♖g1 ♖ad8 25.♗e3 ♘ac7 26.gxf5 gxf5 Black manages to achieve a good blockade position with the closed centre. Seemingly in spite of Malakhov's inaccuracy on move 16, his position was solid enough.



22.f5?

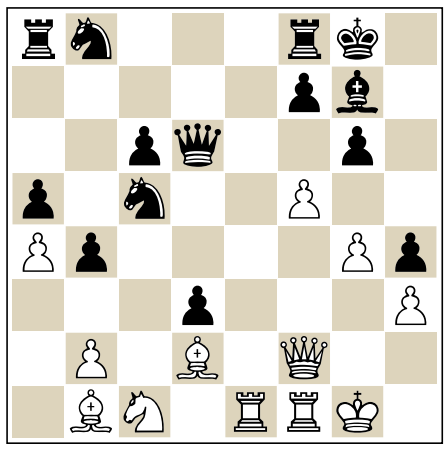
Obviously some miscalculation had crept in.

The less generous 22.♘c1! would pose unpleasant problems for Black, e.g. 22...♕c7 23.♘d3 ♘d7 24.♗xg6 ♘exc5 25.♗f5.

22...♘xc5 23.♗b1 d3 24.♘c1

Worse is 24.♘f4 ♕d6, as it deprives White of a possibility to save the game, which he missed anyway.

24...♕d6



ILYA ODESSKY

'Vladimir Malakhov, a typical Soviet intellectual of the 80s, who prefers good personal relations and self-realization to money or career success.'

25.♗a2?

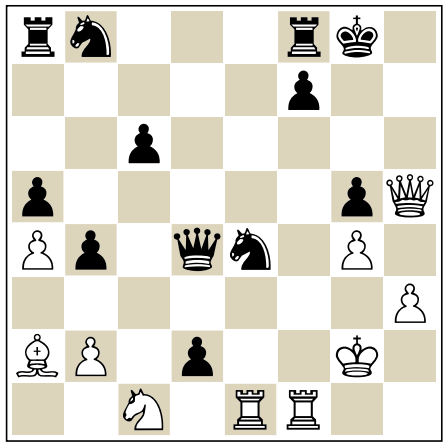
This mistake allows Black to launch a decisive attack.

The f-pawn, supported by two major pieces, should have marched forward: After 25.f6 ♗xf6 26.♕xf6 ♕g3+ 27.♔h1 ♕xh3+ 28.♔g1 ♕xg4+ 29.♔h2 (29.♔h1? ♘e4) 29...♕g3+ (if 29...♘e4 30.♖xe4, and Black is forced to go for a perpetual, as 30...♕xe4?? loses to 31.♗h6) 30.♔h1 ♘bd7 31.♕f3 Black gains five pawns for the piece but the bishop pair still offers White considerable drawing chances.

25...♗d4

The rest is pretty simple.

26.♗e3 ♘e4 27.♕xh4 g5 28.♕h5 d2 29.f6 ♕xf6! 30.♗xd4 ♕xd4+ 31.♔g2



31...dxe1♘+!

The third knight is on the board! White's last hope was 31...dxe1♕?? 32.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 33.♕xf7+ ♔h8 34.♕f8+ ♔h7 35.♖f7+ ♔g6 36.♕g8+ ♔h6 37.♖h7 mate.

After 31...dxe1♘+ he resigned in view of 32.♖xe1 (32.♔h1 ♘g3+) 32...♕f2+ 33.♔h1 ♘g3 mate.

The rook on a8 and the knight on b8 didn't budge in the entire game!

In the second game Svidler used the King's Fianchetto set-up, as against Naiditsch, but Malakhov just traded pawns on e5 and ruthlessly annihilated as many pawns and pieces as he could without compromising his position too much. The game was drawn after 28 moves, and Malakhov advanced to the semi-final.

I think the encounter between Ponomariov and Gashimov is underrated. It was a big fight between two very original players. Neither of them is your typical chess 'grinder'. They both have a huge raw talent, but also understand that chess is not bigger than life... At a crossroads Ruslan, who is probably the greatest believer in his talent, always picked the most

challenging and unclear continuations, hoping to be better at sorting out the complications than his opponent. Gashimov cracked in the first rapid game (see Ponomariov's contribution to this article).

Sergey Karjakin defeated Shakhriyar Mamedyarov in the first classical game. Mamedyarov suffered from his old problem – lack of perfect endgame knowledge. Karjakin's technique was also far from flawless, but it was enough to win. I think Malakhov would have laughed hard at this game, if he wasn't so well mannered. The second game was uneventful: Mamedyarov couldn't break through Karjakin's defence.

Boris Gelfand and Dmitry Yakovenko decided to postpone the real match until the rapid chess stage. Later it was revealed that Gelfand had some blood pressure problems, and Yakovenko either didn't know about it, or knew about it quite well but acted like a gentleman. In any case, the real struggle started in speed chess, and Gelfand proved to be head and shoulders above his opponent.

In Yakovenko's defence I should say that recently he got married, and chess doesn't seem to be his top priority at the moment.

Thus we had two semi-finals: Karjakin-Gelfand and Ponomariov-Malakhov. According to my anonymous super-GM, the first match was more like a premature final.

Gelfand came through three tough tie-breaks against Polgar (don't miss her notes to her comeback in the second game!), Vachier-Lagrave and Yakovenko. He suffered occasional blood pressure problems. However, he played extremely well, and his preparation seemed unrivalled. More importantly, Boris's experience helped him to fully concentrate on the sporting task.

Retrospectively I can say that Karjakin was in a different and more difficult situation. First, he is still in transition between Ukraine and Russia. He has rented an apartment in Moscow (and Moscow is a place where it takes a while for you to settle down) and has obtained Russian citizenship, but FIDE still sees him as a Ukrainian, and it's uncertain when Sergey will legally be able to join the Russian national team.

Additionally, he is obviously regarded as a man to challenge for the title. The Russian Chess Federation gives Karjakin huge support. He gets top coaching from Yury Dokhoian and Alexander Motylev and will certainly receive a guaranteed spot in the national team – which means that one of its current members will have to step aside. Karjakin is a very conscientious and grateful person, and I am sure he already feels the heavy burden of responsibility.

Extra pressure never helps. Before the semi-finals Sergey looked completely worn out. He was unable to give Gelfand a decent fight.

The match basically ended in the first game. Karjakin deviated from the Petroff, Gelfand improvised and offered the opponent a whole piece as early as the 11th move. Karjakin rejected the offer but gave up the initiative as well. Black's pieces began to dominate. Gelfand ended the game in his favour after 33 moves. (Gelfand considered this game to be his cleanest effort and annotated it for this report.)

Karjakin had to win as Black in order to tie the score. Someone who doesn't know Gelfand might have expected the Israeli to take a pragmatic approach to the second game, but Boris went for the most concrete and principled play instead. The game became very sharp, which is always double-edged, no matter who is objectively better. However, Karjakin didn't benefit from this sharpness. Gelfand handled the game perfectly and crushed his opponent, winning the match 2-0. A knock-out!

The other match was completely different and you will find it described by Ponomariov in his contribution. I really like Ruslan Ponomariov. He has a great sense of humour and a very independent opinion on many things in this life. He has a great chess talent and a tremendous fighting spirit. He seems to be a happy man who has found his equilibrium, which is something even the greatest chess minds often fail to master. But, to be honest, I didn't like his chances in this final.

Seven years ago Ruslan advanced to the final of the World Championship in Moscow, where he met Vasily Ivanchuk. Ivanchuk was a huge favourite, but, despite getting several winning positions, he was unable to cope with his nerves, and lost the match. Ponomariov at that time surpassed his countryman only in one chess-related aspect – he was mentally stronger. Surprisingly, this was enough to win the title.

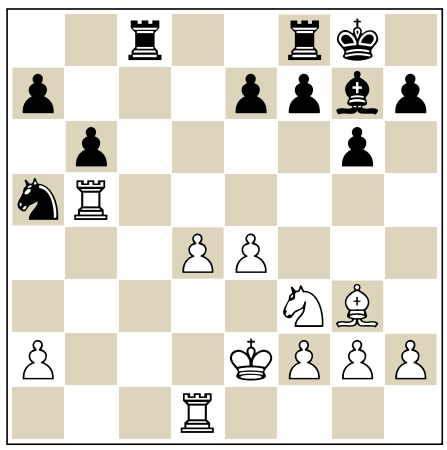
After that impressive achievement Ruslan's results declined somewhat. He prepared for the unification match against Kasparov, which could have earned him an even brighter spot in the history of chess, but the match was cancelled, and this clearly affected Ponomariov's progress. The biggest story about Ruslan since that cancellation was his loss to Evgeny Agrest due to his mobile phone ringing during play.

By 2009, Ponomariov was a step below the elite grandmasters – capable of beating anybody, but not stable enough to earn and sustain the top-five spot, a strong and tricky player, but a mediocre (by

top standards) master of opening preparation. His will remained strong, and his talent remained sharp, but he lacked other things needed to compete with the best. More importantly, he didn't seem to mind this.

His opponent Boris Gelfand is a model professional. Openings and transition to the middlegame, physical preparation, medical aspects... He is a great planner, and proper planning is as important as proper realization of plans. Last, but not least, is his love of the game. He loves chess more than the majority of his colleagues. This completely removes the issue of motivation. Gelfand is always motivated, because he simply wants to play perfectly and create great games.

Unlike in previous rounds, the players now had the luxury of playing four classical chess games. Neither of those, however, surpassed the 40-move mark. The second game, in which Gelfand had white, even ended in a short draw (20 moves), largely due to Boris' blood pressure problems. The only real chance to win the match in classical chess belonged to Ponomariov and he missed it in the third game.



Ponomariov-Gelfand (7.3)
position after 19...0-0

20.♖d5!
The position looked completely poison-free, and Boris just overlooked this possibility. Black must either allow the rook to the seventh rank, or give up the c-file, and both options are bad. After **20...♘c6 21.♖d7 ♖fd8 22.♖xd8+ ♘xd8 23.d5!**
White got a big advantage in the endgame. Later Ruslan won a pawn, but played a little too slow at the critical juncture, and Boris managed to escape and split the point.

The fourth game ended in a draw after some complications, and the players advanced to a ...

Nerve-wrecking tie-break

Game 1, Ponomariov-Gelfand, was a relatively easy draw. White had some pressure, but there was nothing too dramatic. The next game ended the draught, giving Gelfand the lead. And in the third game nerves began to tell. Gelfand blundered a pawn after the opening. Ponomariov had a winning position, but his technique wasn't good even by rapid chess standards. Very erratic play followed. Gelfand made a big mistake on the 49th move and could have lost immediately, but Ruslan missed the winning 51.♖h7+, and it ended in a draw, after which the Ukrainian had to win the last game as Black in order to tie the score.

He did it.

The first set of extra games ended in a stalemate. The closing ceremony of the World Cup was rescheduled. Musicians of the local orchestra, who were invited to the Palace of Arts at 8 p.m., started their rehearsal outside the playing hall.

The outcome of the marathon was decided at the stadium lane: the players began to play blitz. Gelfand won the first game in 21 moves by sacrificing a piece for a brutal Sicilian attack. This was a total devastation. In the second game Boris again seemed to have the initiative, but misplayed somewhere, and the tricky Ruslan got a winning endgame. The match was tied again.

Everybody was grey from tiredness. A 41-year-old is not supposed to have a chance against a younger opponent in such circumstances. But Gelfand hadn't come that far to lose! He kept spending more time than his opponent, but this was a good investment, since he made better moves! The third blitz game was won by Gelfand, and in the fourth one Ponomariov cracked too early, blundering a pawn on the 23rd move in a better position... This was it! Gelfand jumped on a weakness, and energetically converted his advantage. Ruslan Ponomariov was down a piece when he finally resigned on the 44th move. 7-5 in Gelfand's favour! Amazingly, the top seed and the oldest participant stood the test of the cruelest competition in the calendar.

'Today is my mom's birthday, and I could not leave her without a present', said Gelfand a few minutes after the final game. 'She did a lot for me. I am very grateful to her for everything. I also thank my father, may his memory live forever. I am also very thankful to my wife and daughter, who miss me a lot, and grateful to all who helped me during the World Cup. We have been working with Alexander Khuzman for 20 years already. Also, during this tournament I was assisted by Maxim Rodshtein. He did not seem to sleep at all. My friends were calling and writing to me. Thank you all for your support. My victory is your merit as well.'

This victory made Boris the world's Number 6 with 2761 Elo points. This is the highest rating in his career, and who knows how far this man can get, if he wins the Tour de Chess at the age of 41...

NOTES BY

Boris Gelfand

IG 1.4 – C55
Sergey Karjakin
Boris Gelfand
Khanty-Mansiysk 2009 (6.1)

ILYA ODESSKY

Sergey Karjakin and Boris Gelfand do not know yet that their first game will soon see a brutal black onslaught on the white king.

I think that this game was my best achievement in the World Cup. It is not often that you beat such a strong player with black by a mating attack without him making any obvious mistakes.

1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♘f6 3.d3

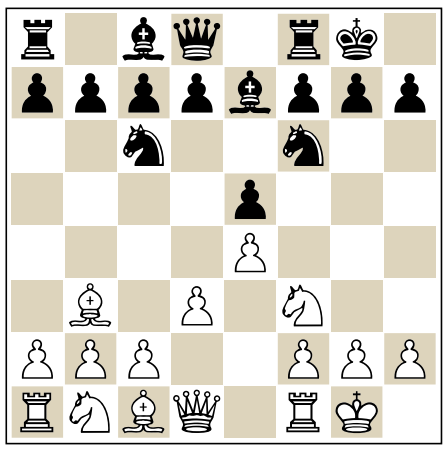
So, no Petroff today. Sergey had already played the Bishop's Opening against me once in a rapid game in Nice in 2008.

3...♘c6

I had played 3...c6 at the time, as I had already done three times in 2009 (including twice in Khanty-Mansiysk). However, it is always nice to change from time to time.

4.♘f3 ♗e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.♗b3

6.♖e1 d6 7.a4 is another possibility, which Morozevich played against me in Astana 2001. I improved on that game and won against Sutovsky with white in Dagomys 2006.



6...d5

The most straightforward system. 6...d6 7.c3 leads to a slower game, similar to the Ruy Lopez.

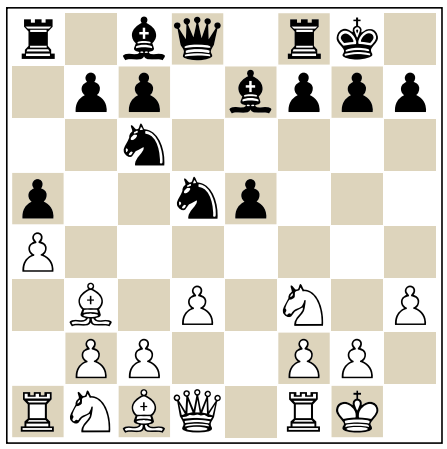
7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.h3

The most challenging move is 8.♖e1 ♗g4 9.h3, when Black has to choose between 9...♗xf3 10.♕xf3 ♘d4 11.♕xd5 ♕xd5 12.♗xd5 ♘xc2 13.♖xe5, with an unclear position, and the pawn sacrifice 9...♗h5 10.g4 ♗g6 11.♘xe5 ♘xe5 12.♖xe5 c6 13.♕f3 ♗f6 (13...♗d6! 14.♖e2 f5 15.g5 f4 16.h4 ♔h8 is unclear, according to Kramnik) 14.♖e2 ♔h8 15.♗xd5 cxd5 16.♘c3 ♗xc3 17.bxc3 ♖c8, with a draw in Kramnik-Kasparov, Novgorod 1995. According to Kramnik, White would have an advantage after 18.♗d2.

8...a5!

Black is chasing the bishop on b3 and trying to create a possibility for the rook on f8 to enter the game.

9.a4



9...♘d4

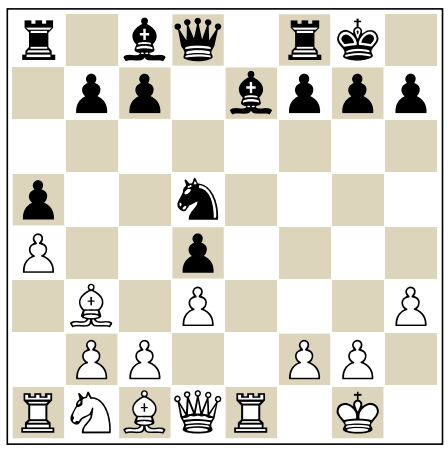
Another solid plan is 9...♗e6.

10.♘xd4 10.♘xe5 ♘xb3 11.cxb3 ♘b4 gives Black more than enough compensation for the pawn.

10...exd4 11.♖e1

When my opponent made this move I was not happy. I had intended to meet 11.♘d2 with 11...♖a6 followed by ...♖g6. At first I thought that 11...♖a6 was not possible now, as Black would lose a piece, but then I got an idea...

11.♘d2 ♖a6 12.♘f3 ♖g6 13.♘e5 ♖e6 14.♕h5 c6 leads to an approximately equal game.



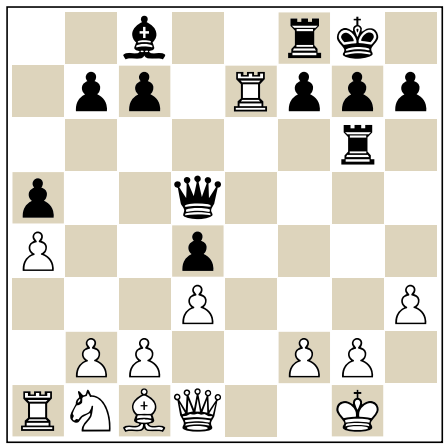
11...♖a6!!

When I saw this move, I immediately got excited. It would be a shame to see such a move and not to make it! But fortunately, I found that this idea works!

The alternative was 11...♗e6 12.♘a3, with a balanced game.

12.♕h5

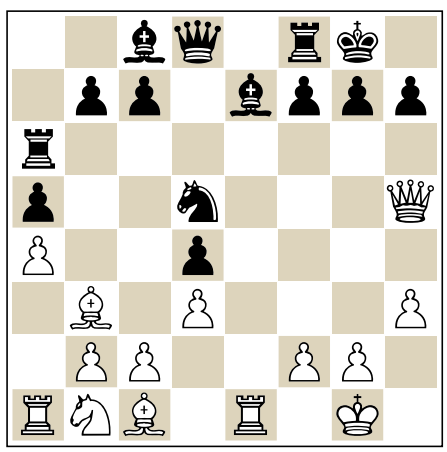
If White accepts the piece sacrifice with 12.♗xd5 ♕xd5 13.♖xe7 ♖g6, he will have problems defending the g2 pawn:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 14.g4?! ♕h5! (I hope I would have found this winning move, as originally I intended to play 14...f5, when after 15.c4! ♕d6 16.♕e2 fxg4 17.h4 g3 18.f3 ♗e6 19.♗g5 h6 20.c5 ♕d5 21.h5 ♕xg5 22.♖xe6 ♖xe6 23.♕xe6+ it is likely that the game would end in a draw) 15.♖e4 (15.f3 is met by 15...f5; 15.♕f3 runs into 15...♗xg4 16.hxg4 ♖xg4+ 17.♔f1 ♖g1+ 18.♔xg1 ♕xf3, and Black wins) 15...♕xh3 16.g5 f5 17.♖e5 f4 18.♕f1 ♕h4 19.♕g2 ♖f5, and White is lost;

B) 14.f3 ♗xh3 15.♖e2 ♕xf3 16.♕f1 (all White's moves are forced) 16...♗xg2 17.♖xg2 ♖xg2+ 18.♕xg2 ♕d1+, with a perpetual check. As my opponent said at the press-conference, he saw this line, but decided to fight for more. A brave decision, but it backfired in this game.



12...♘b4?!

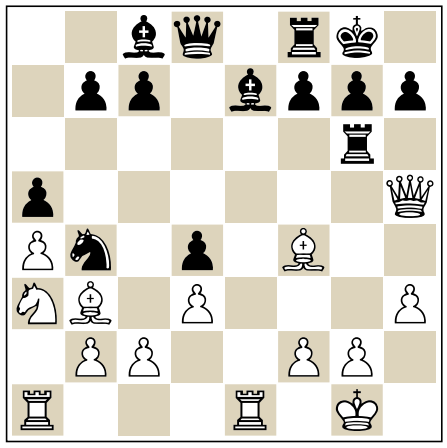
As soon as I made this move I regretted it. Stronger was 12...♗b4!, continuing to ignore the hanging knight on d5. When I was a junior player, it was brought to my attention that this was Fischer's trademark – to attack your opponent's piece instead of defending your own! 13.♖e2 (13.♗d2 ♘f4 14.♕f3 ♖f6) 13...♖e6 14.♖xe6 ♗xe6 15.♘d2 ♖e8, with a slight advantage for Black.

13.♘a3

In case of 13.♘d2 I would have had to find 13...♖h6!?, intending to meet 14.♕xa5 with 14...b6 15.♕a8 ♘c6, with full compensation for the pawn. The queen on a8 really looks weird.

13...♖g6 14.♗f4

White had various moves at his disposal, but none of them gives him chances for an advantage. What's more, he has to be careful to equalize: 14.♘b5 ♗e6 15.♖xe6 fxe6 16.♕e5 ♔h8 17.♕xd4 ♕xd4 18.♘xd4 e5 is clearly better for Black. 14.♗d2 b6 15.♖e4 ♘a6 is equal, and so is 14.♘c4 ♗e6.



14...b6

Played with the idea to fianchetto the bishop on c8 and add it to the attack.

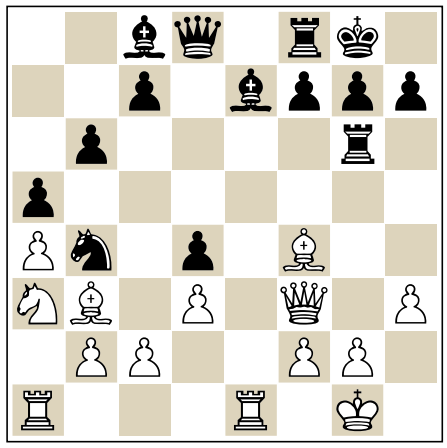
14...♗e6!? deserved serious attention here as well, but I still didn't realize that this is a strong idea (as it turned out, I played it under better circumstances): 15.♗xe6 (15.♘c4 ♗d5) 15...fxe6 16.♗g3 (16.♖e4 ♘d5) 16...♗d6, with a black plus.

15.♕f3

White is trying to prevent 15...♗b7, but the bishop has another way to join the game.

Inadvisable was 15.♘c4 ♗b7 16.♗g3 ♗d5, and strangely enough it is hard to find a good move for White.

Probably better was 15.♗g3! ♗d6 16.♗xd6 ♕xd6 17.♖e4 ♕f6, when it is easier to play for Black, but probably no more.



15...♗e6!

An important idea. As White is forced to exchange the bishops, the rook on f7 joins the attack.

15...♗d7 would be a mistake because of 16.♗xc7.

16.♗xe6

16.♖e2 allows 16...♘xc2! 17.♗xe6 ♘xa1 18.♗c4 c6 19.♗e5 ♗xa3 20.bxa3 b5, and the knight will get out of the corner.

Too hazardous was 16.♖xe6 fxe6 17.♕e4 ♘a6!, as indicated by Sergey Shipov.

16...fxe6 17.♕e4 ♗d6!

Black is winning the fight for the key square f4. Next he intends to bring the knight to this square.

18.♗xd6

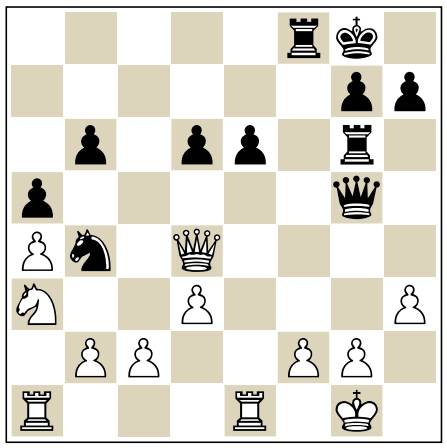
If 18.♗d2 then 18...♘d5 19.♘c4 (19.g3 ♗f4) 19...♗f4, and the knight gets to f4.

Sergey looked at the inventive 18.♗c1 but failed to find a defence after 18...♘d5 19.♘c4 ♕f6 20.♖e2 ♗f4 21.♘e5 ♗xe5 22.♕xe5 ♕f3. Probably the best defence was 18.♗g3 ♕g5 19.h4 ♕h5, but Black's advantage is undisputable.

And finally, 18.♗e5 hits on the lethal 18...♗xe5 19.♕xe5 ♕h4.

18...cxd6 19.♕xd4 More stubborn was 19.g3, but after 19...e5 White's position is in ruins.

19...♕g5



White is helpless. All Black's pieces are attacking the enemy king (the knight will soon join in through the d5-square) and nobody can help it.

20.g3 ♕f5 21.g4

Or 21.h4 e5 22.♕e3 ♘d5 23.♕e2 ♘f4, with a mating attack, while 21.♔h2 ♘xc2! 22.♘xc2 ♕xf2+ transposes into a winning rook ending.

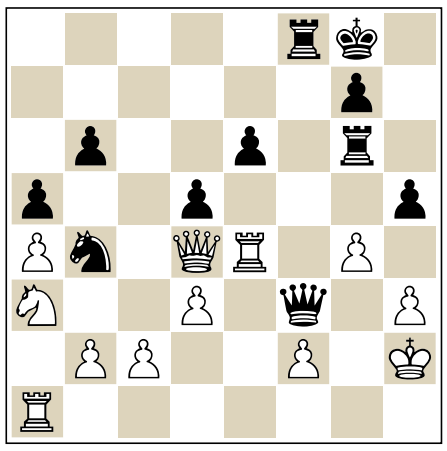
21...h5

According to the engines, 21... ♘d5 22.♔h2 ♕g5 would have been stronger, but I think that both moves are equally strong.

22.♖e4 d5 23.♔h2 Or 23.♖e5 ♕f6 24.♕e3 hxg4 25.h4 ♕xh4 26.♖xe6 g3.

23...♕f3

Black could also finish the game with a mating attack with 23...♕g5, but I went for the simplest solution.



24.♖ee1 hxg4 25.♕e3 gxh3 26.♕xf3 ♖xf3 27.♖g1 ♖xf2+ 28.♔xh3 ♖xg1 29.♖xg1 ♘xc2 30.♘b5 ♖f3+ 31.♔g4 ♖xd3 32.♘d6 ♘e3+ 33.♔f4 ♘c4

White resigned.

NOTES BY
Ruslan Ponomariov

Initially I wanted to comment on one of my games, but it was hard to single out any complete game, well conducted from beginning to end. And in addition, so many different emotions were accumulated, both during and after the tournament, from the almost month-long battle, that I decided to share my impressions, as though transforming my description of the tournament into a single game with its various stages: opening, middlegame and endgame. Looking ahead, I should say that because of the knock-out format, in the end the fate of the Cup was essentially decided in a single blitz game. But let's take everything in order.

Over the last five years the small Russian town of Khanty-Mansiysk has taken on the obligation of staging three World Cups and the Chess Olympiad. On the one hand, it is probably not very good for the development of chess that year after year such events occur in the same place, far from civilisation, as was also the case, for example, when many competitions took place in Elista. But I was pleased that at least for a time there was clarity in the calendar and it was possible to prepare calmly.

I had roughly two months for preparation before the start of the first round. I decided to devote part of this time to practice, and literally just before the start I played in Moscow. Here I warmed up thoroughly, but I also got quite a shock! Possibly it is simply a coincidence, but in both this and the previous World Cup it was the players who had competed beforehand in Moscow who met in the final.

Of course, it is rather easier to talk about this when the outcome is known. Although I perform quite successfully in knock-out events, there is always anxiety before the start. It is really very disappointing to fly in, play just two games, make just one mistake and be eliminated. From my own experience, my advice is simply to believe in yourself, make the moves which you think are the best, and thus proceed gradually from match to match. To win you don't need to defeat 127 players – seven will be sufficient!

In addition, the pairing system is advantageous to the rating favourites, giving them opponents who are not even in the world's top hundred. Of course, to win you have to overcome your opponent and constantly force him to solve problems; this is the characteristic feature of matches, when two individuals meet. But in the initial rounds I was able to win on class alone: in certain aspects of play my opponents had obvious deficiencies, which I was able to exploit.

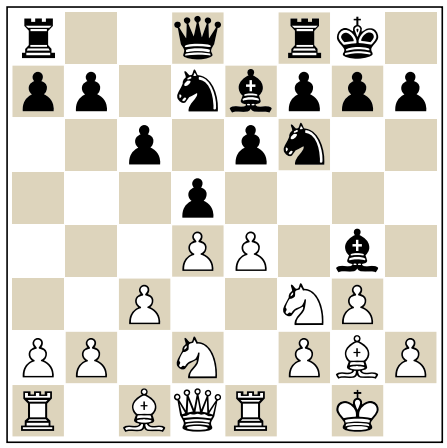
It was pleasing that in the third round I was able to outplay my opponent Alexander Motylev in opening preparation, in that component where he is especially strong. In the first game I gained an overwhelming position by subtle cavalry manoeuvres, and had it not been for a mistake in conversion I could have called this my best game in the tournament.

RE 22.12 – A07
Ruslan Ponomariov
Alexander Motylev
Khanty-Mansiysk 2009 (3.1)

1.♘f3!?

I think that my choice of the Réti Opening came as something of a surprise to my opponent, since it has not been very popular in recent times. But I was inspired by the games of Radjabov, such that I also wanted to try it.

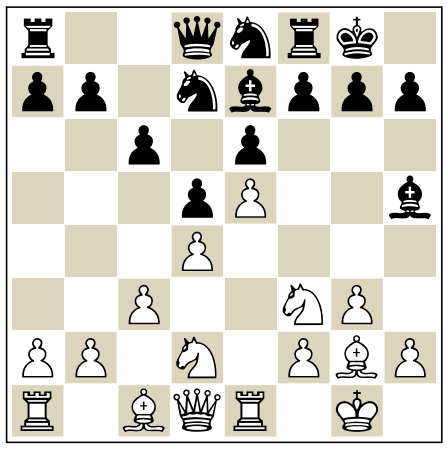
1...d5 2.g3 c6 3.♗g2 ♗g4 4.0-0 ♘d7 5.d4 e6 6.♘bd2 ♘gf6 7.♖e1 ♗e7 8.e4 0-0 9.c3



9...♗h5 The correct way to play for Black was later demonstrated in one of my rapid games with Boris Gelfand – 9...dxe4 10.♘xe4 ♘xe4 11.♖xe4 ♗xf3! 12.♗xf3 ♗g5!, and with this balance of material I don't believe that White can create anything on the kingside.

10.e5 For some reason, White has usually indulged in some kind of rubbish here and played 10.♕b3, breaking the pin in order to jump with his knight to e5. To me it seemed far more logical to seize space in the centre, but of course I had to think about how then to combat Black's counterplay on the queenside.

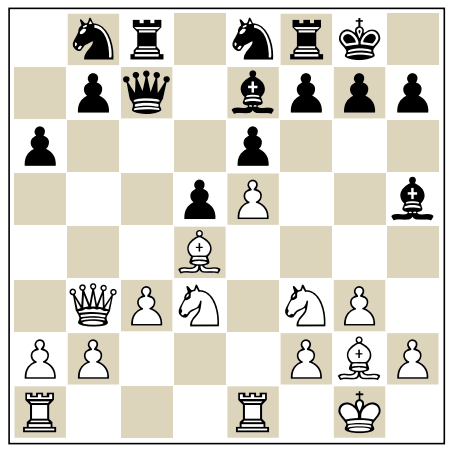
10...♘e8



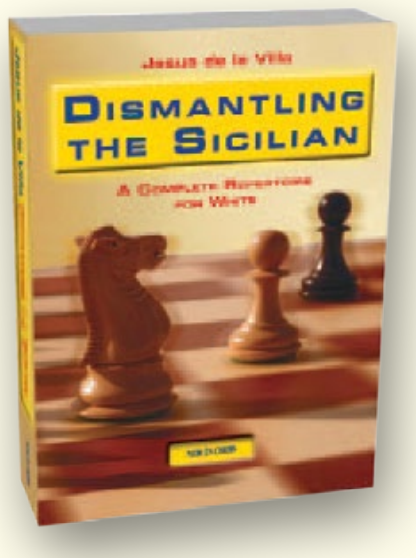
11.♘b3!

The start of some subtle manoeuvres. It was more natural to play the knight to f1, and after h2-h4 to h2, creating threats on the kingside, but then too Black has clear play on the queenside. Thus it is not yet clear whose chances are better. My idea was to hinder Black's standard c6-c5, and also to play my knight by a roundabout way to f4. Such an idea is not so hard to find by those who play the closed variation with 4.♘f3 against the Caro-Kann – there this plan is very typical. After this there followed some seemingly quite natural moves, but at the board Alexander was unable to cope with the problems posed.

11...♖c8 12.♗e3 c5 13.♘c1 cxd4 14.♗xd4 a6 15.♘d3 ♘b8 16.♕b3 ♕c7



17.♘d2!? Another unexpected



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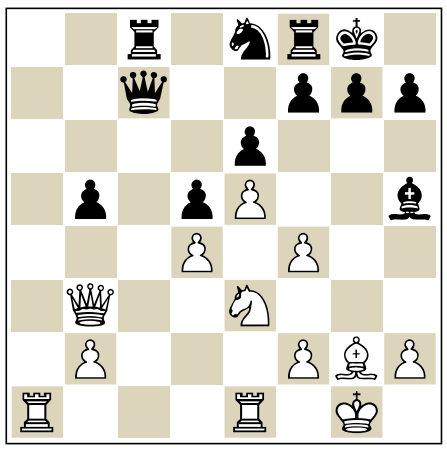
ILYA ODESSKY

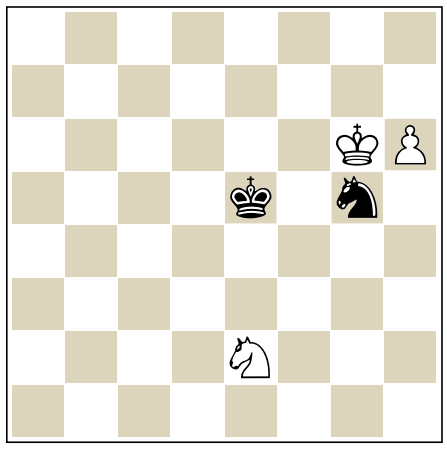
Where did all those people suddenly come from? An army of arbiters invades the stage after Etienne Bacrot's draw claim against Ruslan Ponomariov.

knight pirouette. **17...b5 18.♘f4 ♗g4?!** This move would appear to be an obvious mistake – here the bishop is not very comfortable. 18...♗g6 was more natural.
19.♘f1 ♗g5 20.♘e3 ♗xf4 21. gxf4 ♗h5 22.a4 ♘c6 23.axb5 ♘xd4 24.cxd4 axb5 And here instead of the move made by me



25.♕b4? it was correct to play 25. f5!, not allowing Black to coordinate his pieces, whereas after my mistake the game dragged out for a long time and I was able to win only after another 55 moves.

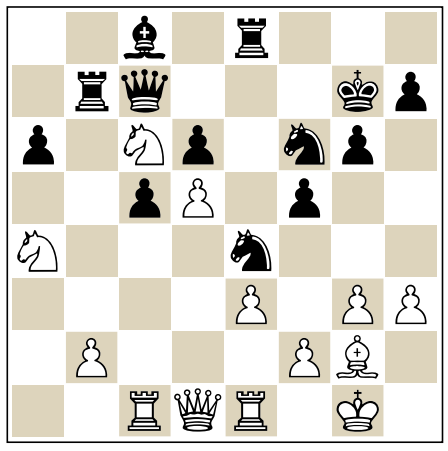
The first hiccup unexpectedly occurred in the next match with Bacrot. Initially it all went well: a quick draw in the first game with black, and in the second I set constant problems with white. It was already the sixth hour of play, and all the other games had finished. Nerves were very much on edge, since the fate of the match was being decided. It was literally impossible to get up from the board, since we were playing on the 30-second addition. Suddenly in the diagram position my opponent made an unexpected move:



Ponomariov-Bacrot
Khanty-Mansiysk 2009 (4.2)
position after 80.♔g6

Without playing on the board **80... ♘e6** he claimed a draw by threefold repetition. This came as a real shock to me, since I appeared to have kept the situation under control. On verification it transpired that there had not been anything even close to a threefold repetition, as my opponent admitted. In accordance with the rules I was given an additional three minutes, but my concentration had been broken and on the very next move I made a blunder.
81.♘g1 ♘f8+ 82.♔f7?
For the 15 moves before this I had played almost ideally according to Tablebases, and the goal was now very close: 82.♔g7 ♔f5 (82... ♘e6+ 83.♔g8 ♘g5 84.♘f3+) 83. ♘f3 ♘e6+ 84.♔g8 ♘f8 85.♘e5, and White wins.
82...♔f5! But now it is a draw.
83.♘f3 ♘h7 84.♔g7 ♘f6 85. ♘d4+ ♔g5 86.♘e6+ ♔h5 87. ♘c7 ♔g5 88.♘d5 ♘e8+ 89.♔h7 ♘d6 90.♘c3 ♘f7 91.♘e4+ ♔f4 92.♔g7 ♘xh6 93.♔xh6 ♔xe4
Draw.

The following day I had to play a tie-break, using up extra effort and a rest day, which probably could not fail to tell in my next game, the first of my quarter-final match with Gashimov. By the regulations we played without a rest day, and it was only before the final that one free day was planned.



Ponomariov-Gashimov
Khanty-Mansiysk 2009 (5.1)
position after 23...♖b7

The opening was a rather complicated version of the Benoni. To Vugar's credit, he did not follow

the general fashion of choosing solid openings such as the Petroff or the Marshall Attack, but aimed for a complicated fight in variations such as the Najdorf or, as in the present game, the Benoni, which greatly impressed me. Although, in the given specific tournament this may have prevented him from achieving a better result, since matches of two games are very short for such risky strategy.

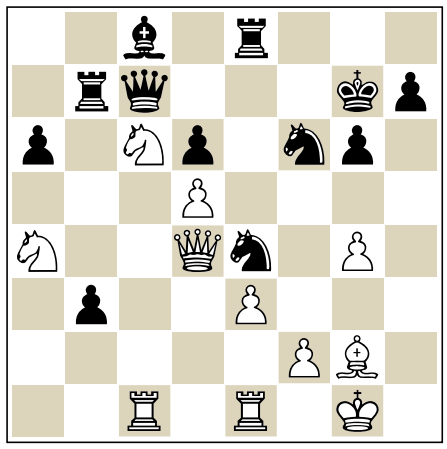
24.b4!?

I decided to give as good as one gets and to activate my pieces with a pawn sacrifice. Otherwise I might have even stood worse.

24...cxb4 25.♕d4 b3 26.g4!

Continuing to play broadly over the entire board: first b4, and now also g4. My opponent became rattled and was clearly unable to withstand such pressure.

26...fxg4 27.hxg4



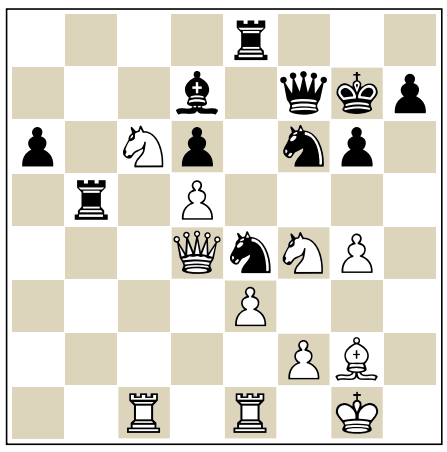
27...b2?

For some reason Black gives up his main trump, his passed pawn. It was correct to sacrifice a piece by 27...♗xg4! 28.f3 ♗xf3 29.♗xf3 ♕d7, when the situation is absolutely unclear, since after 30.♖f1, which I was planning earlier, Black has 30...♘g3 31.♖f2 ♘f5.

28.♘xb2 ♖b5 29.♘d3?

29.f3! ♖xd5 30.♘b4 would have won in literally a couple of moves. I overlooked that if 30...♕xc1 (30...♖c5 31.♘2d3) White can interpose the check 31.♕a7+, and otherwise Black loses material in every case.

29...♕f7 30.♘f4 ♗d7



31.♘e6+

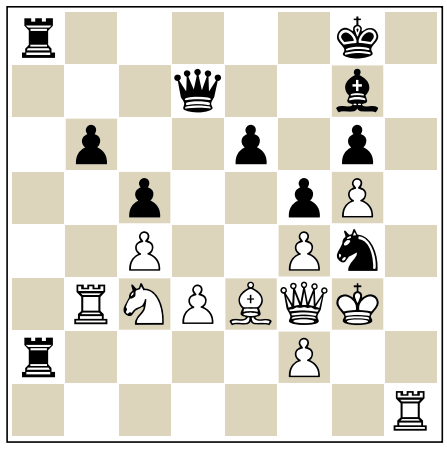
It was probably still possible to fight for an advantage with 31.f3. In the game I decided to carry out a little tactical operation with the win of a knight. But after this the material is significantly reduced and there is practically nothing left with which to win.

31...♗xe6 32.dxe6 ♕xe6 33.f3 ♘g5 34.f4 ♕xg4 35.fxg5 ♖xg5 36.♖c2 ♕xd4 37.♘xd4 ♘d5 38.♘f3 ♖g4 39.♘h2 ♖g5 40.♘f3 ♖g4 41.♘h2 ♖g5 42.♘f3

Draw.

Then came a quick draw with black in 15 moves and again a tie-break. I have to say that the atmosphere during the time-break was rather unpleasant for me: one of the deputy chief arbiters was Mr Gasanov, the vice-president of the Azerbaijan Chess Federation, the chairman of the appeals committee was Mr Azmaiparashvili, the trainer of the Azerbaijan team, and opposite our board in the hall were sitting Vugar's brother and his second, grandmaster Iordachescu. In this atmosphere I tried not to be diverted and to look only at the board. In Khanty-Mansiysk my second, the Ukrainian grandmaster Yury Kuzubov, helped me as best he could. It was not clear why, for the sake of balance at the tournament, there was no one from the Ukraine among the control team. And why was the appeals committee not made up of all the respected, well-known and unengaged people?

At any event, in the first rapid game I had white; I was outplayed and I had to seek saving chances.

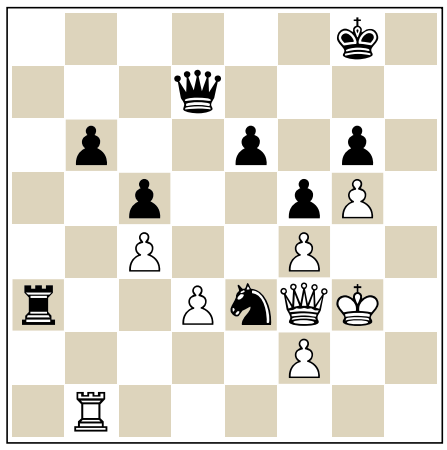


Ponomariov-Gashimov
Khanty-Mansiysk 2009 (5.3)
position after 35.♘c3

35...♗xc3

A questionable exchange, which became one of the causes of Black's disaster. Black's bishop is a very good piece, since it defends its own king and in some cases may be able to join the attack. Whereas for me it is quite difficult to find employment for my knight. 35...♖2a3, retaining the tension, came into consideration, with the idea that after 36.♘b5 ♖xb3 37.♕xa8+ ♗f8 Black wins the d3 pawn.

36.♖xc3 ♖8a3 37.♖xa3 ♖xa3 38.♖b1 ♘xe3



39.♖xb6!?

At this moment my opponent was already seriously short of time and I decided to complicate the position. Objectively correct was 39.fxe3 ♕xd3 40.♖xb6 ♕xe3 41.♕xe3 ♖xe3+ 42.♔f2 ♖e4 43.♔f3 ♔f7 44.♖b7+ ♔f8 45.

♖b8+ ♔e7 46.♖b7+ ♔d6 47.♖g7 ♖xc4 48.♖xg6, when White has good chances of making a draw in the rook endgame.

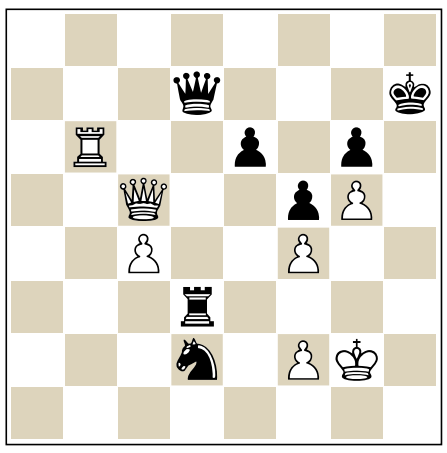
39...♘f1+ 40.♔g2 ♘d2 41.♕e2

It is already too late to deviate: 41.♖b8+ ♔f7 42.♕h3 ♕c6+ 43.f3 ♕xf3+ 44.♕xf3 ♘xf3 45.♔xf3 ♖xd3+ 46.♔e2 ♖d4 and a similar rook endgame is reached, only with an extra tempo for Black.

41...♖xd3 42.♕e5 ♔h7

The most methodical way of converting the extra piece was 42...♕e8 43.♖b8 ♖d8 44.♖xd8 ♕xd8 45.♕xe6+ ♔g7, but it was not so easy to grasp this when playing in the 10-second addition.

43.♕xc5

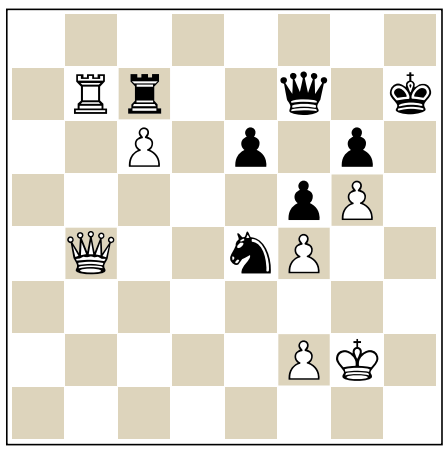


Now White has real counterplay, despite having only one pawn for the piece. The black king is weak, which makes it difficult for him to launch a counterattack, and it is not so easy to neutralize my passed pawn. It promoted to a queen in just five moves!

43...♘e4 44.♕b4

An interesting alternative was 44.♕f8!? ♕g7 45.♕c8 ♖d7 46.♖b3 ♘xf2 47.♖f3.

44...♕f7 45.c5 ♖d7 46.c6 ♖c7 47.♖b7



47...e5??

The final mistake in the remaining seconds on the clock. 47...♘d6 would still have drawn, whereas now the white pawn definitely promotes.

48.♖xc7 Black resigned.

ILYA ODESSKY

While an arbiter blocks the spectators' view, Boris Gelfand and Ruslan Ponomariov ready themselves for another episode in their bloodcurdling final.

After such a knock-down my opponent was unable to regain his composure. Although, in order to get even, he still had two White games left and, as this game showed, he also had chances with black, the match concluded ahead of schedule after two more games.

I was filled with positive emotions, having won such a difficult match and improved on my result from the last World Cup, where I only reached as far as the quarter-final. But the main goal of winning the Cup and qualifying for the Candidates was still a long way off. Because of the missed opportunities, my play gave the impression that it was not so easy to win in normal time. To force the opponent to make mistakes under the long time control, more persistence and energy are required, which means that new errors are likely in the rapid chess, which is what happened in the semi-final and the final. This does not mean that I deliberately aimed for tie-breaks, by making short draws – by no means. If you look at the games, you will see that I was not averse to draws with black and I endeavoured to create problems, however small, with white. In particular I was quite close to a win in the third game with normal time in the match with Gelfand. After failing to win against Bacrot, I got bogged down in draws, and I failed to win any more games in normal time.

It was probably a surprise to many that my semi-final opponent was Vladimir Malakhov, not normally one to set the pulse racing. Many regard him as an amateur chess player-cum-physicist, for which, it would appear, many of his opponents paid the price on the way to the semi-final. In fact, if you look at the statistics, you will see that he takes part in competitions more often than I do, and his recent success in the Eu-

ropean rapid-play championship in Warsaw explains why I found things so difficult against him in the tie-break.

In the first game I gained an advantage and I thought that I was close to a win. But my opponent found a clever piece sacrifice and seized the initiative. In the resulting rook endgame with an extra pawn he displayed his best qualities in the conversion of the advantage and deservedly won. After the game I was not even seriously upset, since my opponent had played very well. By the old system, when only two games were played, this would have signified a disaster, but now the system has changed and four rapid games are played. And I continued to fight, imposing my play. But, of course, it was not without mistakes by my opponent that I won the next three games and went forward to the final, where my opponent was Boris Gelfand.

Before the final it was hard to say whose chances were better. My opponent's rating was higher, but the score in our individual encounters was in my favour: in 'classical' it was all draws, in rapid I had +2 without any defeats, and in blitz I had won five games with two defeats. In Boris's favour was the fact that he had won his semi-final match against Karjakin 2-0, which meant that he was on an emotional high and compared with me had an extra rest day, which at the age of 41 is especially important.

In the main four games of the match there was a roughly equal fight and they each ended in a draw. It was not easy to breach the 'reinforced concrete' in the form of the Petroff Defence, and in a short time it is not always possible to find new, fresh ideas towards the end of a tournament, when they are already running low. I would be happy to play a longer match with Gelfand, as for example in 2002, when after a break I played a match of seven games with Ivanchuk. But rules are rules, and to change them during the course of an event is inadmissible. But even those few games were very useful and instructive. It is not often that one is able to play such an expert on the Catalan as Gelfand. I had time to try various lines, but I wanted more!

Everything was again decided in the tie-break. Including Moscow, we had each played 25 games with the long control, more than a dozen rapid games, and more than 40 blitz games. Of course, because of this the overall quality of the play deteriorated, more mistakes appeared, which meant more opportunities, and the question was who would exploit them better. In this respect the 3rd rapid game was typical: I had lost the preceding one, I needed to level the score, and this was my last White in the rapid games.

SL 1.4 – D11
Ruslan Ponomariov
Boris Gelfand
Khanty-Mansiysk 2009 (7.7)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♕b3 dxc4 5.♕xc4 ♗g4 6.♘c3 ♘bd7 7.e4 e6 8.♗e3 ♗e7 9.♕b3 0-0 10.♗e2

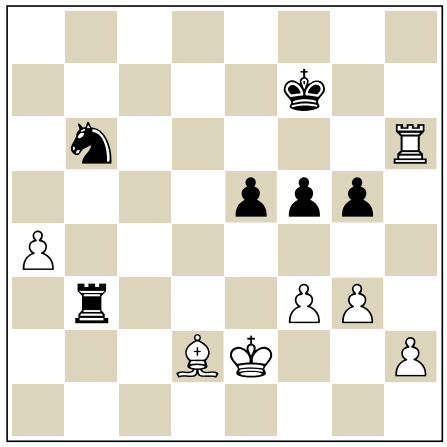
Black has played the opening passively, allowing White complete control of the centre, but, of course, it was not necessary to blunder. After making the move

10...b5?

Boris went somewhere away from the board. There followed the fairly simple

11.♘e5!

and Black lost a pawn. With that, however, the adventures did not end. The battle continued and I squandered my advantage. The following position was reached:

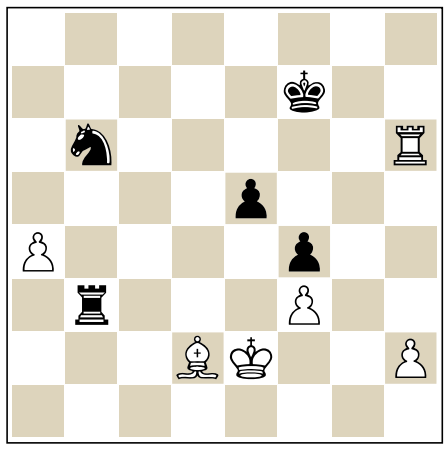


position after 49.♖xh6

49...f4?

Black should have tried to save the game by 49...♘xa4 50.♗xg5 ♘c3+ 51.♔d2 ♘b5 52.♖f6+ ♔g8 when, in view of the limited material and the activity of his pieces, his chances of achieving this would have been very great.

50.gxf4 gxf4



51.a5?

There was an elementary win by 51.♖h7+, and after the king moves – 52.♖b7.

51...♘c4 52.a6 ♖b2 53.♔d3 ♘xd2 54.a7 ♖a2 55.♖h8 ♘xf3 56.a8♕ ♖xa8 57.♖xa8 ♘xh2

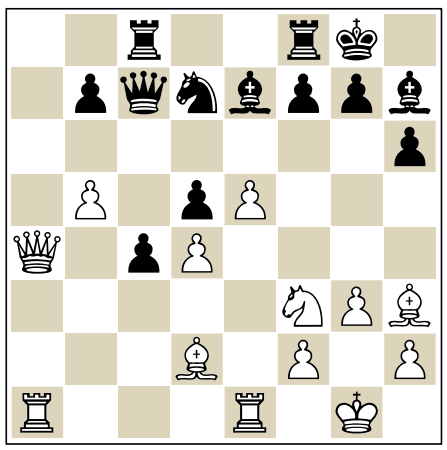
But now it is an obvious draw.

After this omission I needed to win to order in my last black game, and I managed to do this, although I don't know how! I can imagine how hard it must have been after this for my opponent, when overall victory was so close.

But with all the emotion it was also not easy for me to compose myself, and within 15 minutes we had to play blitz with 5 minutes plus 3 seconds a move. I lost

the first game altogether without a fight. Again I had to try and draw level! But this time with white and again I succeeded!

To the credit of my opponent he did not wilt, but continued to fight to the end. Everything was decided in what was to be the last blitz game.



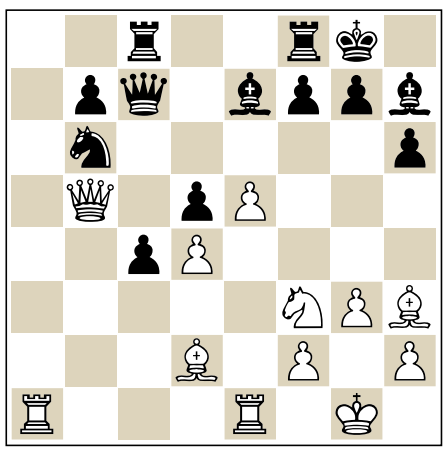
Ponomariov-Gelfand
Khanty-Mansiysk 2009 (7.12)
position after 22...♕c7

Black has again played the opening passively, and I decided that it was time to carry out a little combination, which was obviously impractical after already playing for six hours that day.

23.b6??

After the simple 23.♗a5 b6 24.♗c3 White has complete control of the entire board. Then he can either play his knight to e3, or invade on the a-file.

23...♘xb6 24.♕b5



24...♕c6!

I had overlooked this simple move. But if at least I had seen that after 24...♖a8 25.♗a5 ♖a6 the pinned knight cannot in fact be won, I would definitely not have given up my pawn. After the move in the game it all radically changes, it is now Black who has the advantage, and he did not miss his chance.

25.♖a5 c3 26.♗f4 ♘c4 27.♕xc6 ♖xc6 28.♖xd5 c2 29.♖b5 ♖b6 30.♖xb6 ♘xb6 31.♗c1 ♗b4 32.♗d2 ♘d5 33.e6 ♖e8 34.exf7+ ♔xf7 35.♖c1 ♗xd2 36.♘xd2 ♘b4 37.♗f1 ♖c8 38.♘b3 ♘a2 39.♖a1 c1♕ 40.♘xc1 ♖xc1 41.♖xa2 ♗d3 42.♖b2 ♖xf1+ 43.♔g2 ♗a6 44.d5 ♖d1

White resigned.

Of course, it was a great pity that it all ended in this way. The world of sport is rather cruel: a great deal of competition, but first place for just one out of many! However, I am still hoping to gain revenge and to please my supporters. After all, in contrast to my opponent I am only 26 years old, and this gives its advantages in life ☺

NOTES BY
Judit Polgar

IG 4.12 – C24
Judit Polgar
Boris Gelfand
Khanty-Mansiysk 2009 (3.2)

As the World Cup is played with the knock-out system and I had lost the first game of my mini-match against Boris Gelfand, I had to win the second game no matter how, to equalize the match. Unfortunately, this is easier said than done ☺.

1.e4 e5

It is well-known that Boris is extremely well prepared in the openings and it was really hard to think of something I could surprise him with. Boris has started to play the Petroff Defence as one of his main weapons as Black, next to the Najdorf, in which he is regarded as one of the biggest experts of modern times.

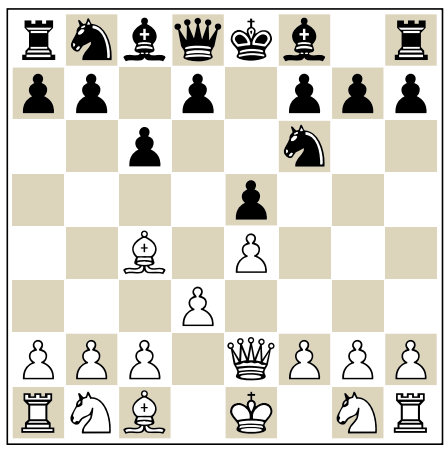
2.♗c4

In this must-win situation it was absolutely clear to me that the only way I could have a chance to equalize the match was by making the game as complicated as possible and by trying to get a position that he is less familiar with. I chose this move for two reasons: 1) Boris had played more than 100 games in the Petroff, and looking at his games it was clear to me that he feels safe and very well prepared in those positions. 2) I had never played 2.♗c4 before, so it was unlikely he had prepared for it.

2...♘f6 3.d3 c6

After checking my opponent's games against 2.♗c4 I realized that he clearly favours the plan with ...d5, followed by ...♗d6 and ...♘bd7.

4.♕e2



I considered this move a fantastic choice, because Black is having problems playing ...d5 and has to choose an other plan. My move was purely psychological.

4...♗e7

The most popular reply and a logical choice. The move 4...d5 can be seriously considered in this position and it would be very much in line with Gelfand's style, but in this tournament situation it was highly unlikely that he would play it.

5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗b3 d6

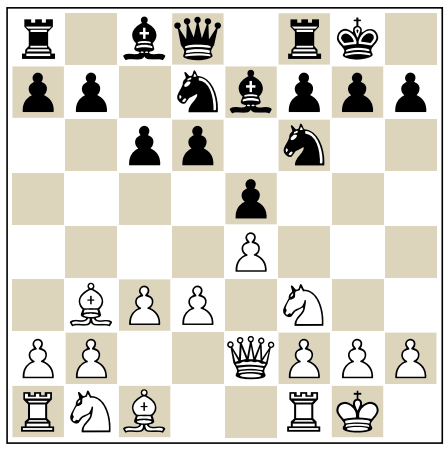
Still, 6...d5 might be an interesting try, but it requires serious analysis, since it is a pawn sacrifice.

7.0-0

I was happy to have reached a position that Boris was not so familiar with, and hoped that we would get a very complicated game. That was the maximum I could hope for. In such a situation, when you have to win, the most important thing is to keep the tension and present your opponent with many options, hoping he will use a lot of time... and in time-trouble anything can happen.

7...♘bd7 8.c3

A natural move, not allowing Black to take my bishop with ...♘c5.



8...a5

An excellent move. Gelfand acts very energetically and chooses an aggressive plan. In fact, I was expecting Black to follow a more solid plan, and play it more like a Ruy Lopez with ...h6 and ...♖e8.

9.a4

It was obvious that I would not allow Black to play ...a4/b5, taking the initiative.

9...b5

The logical follow-up of Black's previous move. But I was still a bit surprised by this choice, as I had expected a more solid continuation. There are many, such as 1) ...b6 ...♗b7 or ...♗a6 and ...d5 in the long run; 2) leaving the bishop on c8 and improving the position on the kingside with ...h6 and ...♖e8, ...♘f8, ...♘g6, ...♗e6 or ...d5; 3) ...♘c5 and ...♗e6. All these are interesting choices.

10.♗c2

Stopping the immediate 10...♘c5,

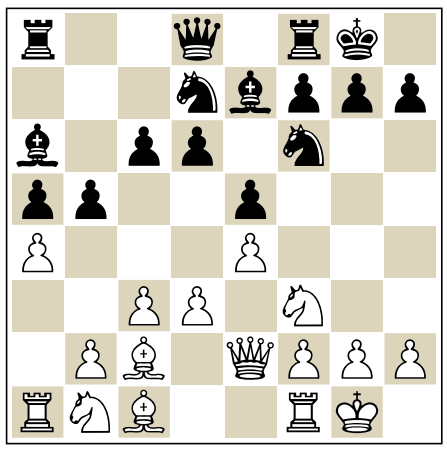
NEW IN CHESS

Judit Polgar: 'I was kind of enjoying that I had to win, which allowed me to do some crazy things ☺'

because then White could play 11. axb5 cxb5 12.d4, and Black would regret his early pawn moves.

10...♗a6

Black plays very concretely and tries to stop White from playing d4.



11.axb5

After 11.♘bd2 I didn't like 11... b4. I wanted to open up the position and change the pawn structure in order to complicate the game.

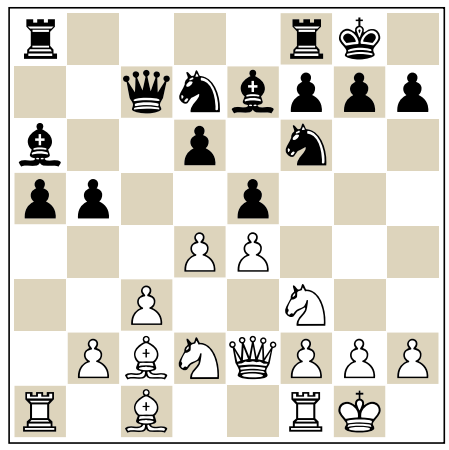
After the text-move 11...♗xb5 would be not logical, as I would play 12.c4 ♗a6 13.♗d2, and the a5 pawn is weak.

11...cxb5 12.♘bd2 ♕c7

This is a good square for the queen, but I had expected 12...♕b6 to protect the a6 bishop, which might be useful later on, and the queen would also have an eye on the d4-square.

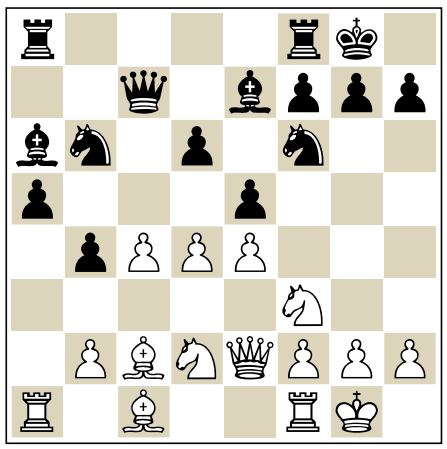
13.d4

I had the feeling that Boris was surprised that even after his last move I could play d4. Generally, these are important moments psychologically speaking in a game in which one is playing against a move or plan and your opponent still plays it.



13...a4?!

The first move that comes to mind after 13.d4 is 13...b4!, when my plan was to reply with 14.c4 (14.♗d3 is an option for White, but after 14...♗xd3, 15.♕xd3 bxc3 16.bxc3 fails to yield an advantage, and the game will probably end in a draw) and develop with b3, ♗b2, but it seems that I will not be in time after 14...♘b6!, with the following ideas:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 15.♗d3 is not good because Black pushes 15...a4! and would be better with his passed pawn;

B) 15.dxe5 would help only Black after 15...dxe5 16.♖xa5 ♘bd7! 17.♖a4 (17.♖a1? would lose material immediately after 17...♗xc4) 17...♖fb8 (this is probably even better than 17...♘c5 18.♖xb4 ♕a5, when Black wins the exchange, but after 19.♖b5 ♗xb5 20.cxb5 White has compensation). The threat is ...♘c5 and then again after ...♗xc4 White would lose material: 18.♕d1 ♘c5 19.♖a1 b3 20.♗b1 ♘fd7, with a fantastic position for Black;

C) 15.b3 would also be met by 15...a4;

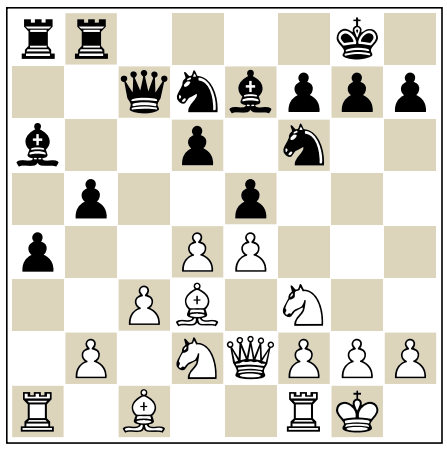
D) 15.♖xa5 ♘xc4 16.♖xa6 (this is forced) 16...♘xd2 17.♖xa8 ♘xf3+ 18.♕xf3 ♖xa8 19.♗b3, and Black shouldn't have serious problems. It should be about equal.

14.♗d3

Aimed against the threat ...b4, and also it is always useful to get out of the pin, so that after ...exd4 I can reply cxd4.

14...♖fb8

After this rook has left the kingside an unexpected attack materializes.



15.♘h4

I got tempted by an immediate attack and thought I would be able to exploit Black's last move. 15.♖e1 was the solid continuation, with the plan ♘f1-♘e3 or ♘g3.

15...g6 Obviously not allowing the white knight to go to f5, which would be its ideal post.

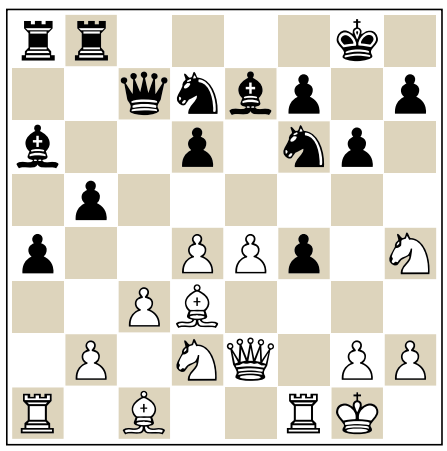
16.f4 It was time to take action and I was ready to burn all my bridges – after all I had to win this game to equalize the match!

16.♘df3 was the solid continuation, but I could not stop myself from attacking immediately ☺.

16...exf4

16...exd4 was an other choice, when after 17.cxd4 ♕b6 18.♘hf3 White is extremely strong in the centre.

On the immediate 16...♘h5 my plan was 17.♘f5, with a messy position.



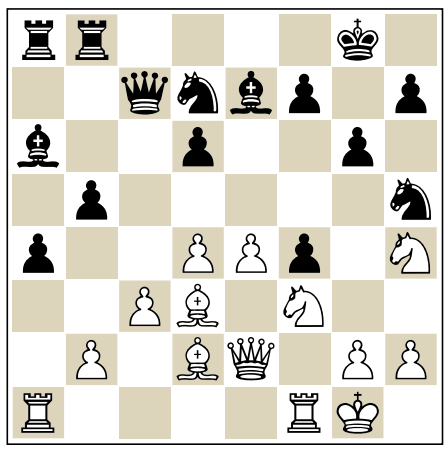
17.♘df3

17.♖xf4 was impossible due to 17...♘h5 18.♖g4 ♘df6, and Black has the advantage. 17.♕f3 would be too slow, as after 17...b4! Black is faster.

An interesting idea was 17.♘b1!?. To be honest, this move crossed my mind but somehow it felt too artificial and I was already focused on the attack against the king. Strangely enough, this may objectively be the best move in the position! 17...♘h5 (or 17...♘e5 – a very interesting idea – 18.dxe5 dxe5, with full compensation for Black) 18.♘f5 ♗f8 19.g4 fxg3 20.hxg3, with compensation for the pawn.

17...♘h5 18.♗d2

My first idea was 18.g4, but it doesn't work because of 18...fxg3 19.♘g5 (19.♘f5 gxf5 20.♘g5 ♘df6 21.♖xf5 ♗c8 and Black is defending and keeps the piece) 19...♘df6, and I didn't see how I could continue my attack.



18...♘b6

Here 18...♕b6!? was a great option for Black to aim for two ideas: 1) ...b4 and 2) ...♘e5, two moves that can cause most unpleasant situations for White: 19.g4 fxg3 20.♘g5 and 20...b4 to liquidate some pieces, and now if 21.♘f5, 21...♗xg5 22.♗xg5 gxf5 23.♗xa6 ♖xa6 24.♕xh5 bxc3 25.bxc3 ♕b2!; and if 21.♗xa6 then 21...♕xa6 22.♕f3 ♕c4!. 21.♖xf7? is a blunder because of 21...♗xd3 22.♕xd3 ♘e5, and Black wins.

19.g4

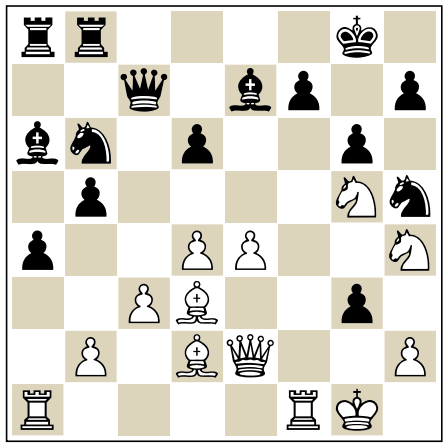
After this move I felt 'young' again! When I was around 15 years old I had many messy games of this kind ☺. It's a very bad feel-

ing to lose the first game in a two-game match, but during this game I was kind of enjoying that I had to win, which allowed me to do some crazy things ☺.

19...fxg3 20.♘g5

In this position Black is better if he plays accurately, but to play such a complicated position with black when a draw is enough to proceed to the next stage in the World Cup, is scary, especially with 17 minutes left on the clock (plus 30 seconds per move) for 20 moves.

20.♘f5 would lead to crazy complications, but if Black plays accurately, he will win in the end, e.g. 20...gxf5 21.♘g5 ♘g7 22.exf5 ♖e8. 20.e5 looks like a good attacking option, but after 20...♗xh4 (20...♖e8!? is always a good defending move and creates all kinds of counterplay) 21.♘xh4 dxe5 and if 22.♘f5 ♘f4 (closing the lines) 23.♘h6+ ♔g7, and Black wins.



20...♘c4?

This move shows that Black is getting confused. After eight minutes of thinking this is a strange decision. Black's best bet was 20...♗xg5!? 21.♗xg5 ♘c4 22.♘f5. Black should have played 20...♗xg5 first to get the position which we had in the game in order to avoid the ♖xf7 option.

Also strong was 20...d5!?, and now:

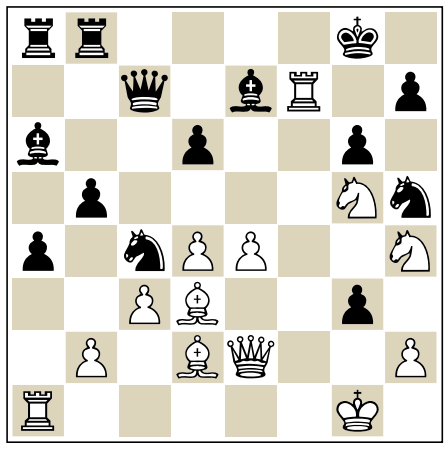
A) 21.♖xf7? is refuted by 21...gxh2+;

B) 21.♘f5 ♗xg5 22.♗xg5 gxh2+ 23.♔g2 f6 24.♘h6+ ♔g7 25.♗xf6+ ♘xf6 26.e5 ♘h5, and Black wins.

C) 21.e5 ♗xg5 22.♗xg5 ♗c8!, and Black should win.

21.♘f5

Of course, the right move was 21.♖xf7!, which was the first move I started to calculate, but somehow, even though I had the feeling that it was winning, I felt it was too complicated:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

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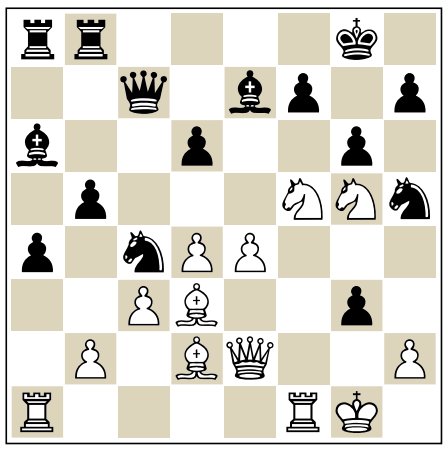
A) 21...♘xd2 22.♘f5! This was clear: 22...♗xg5 23.♖xc7;

B) 21...♖f8 22.♖xh7 ♘xd2 (22...♖f2 23.♕g4 wins; 22...gxh2+ 23.♔xh2 ♘xd2 24.♖xh5 gxh5 25.♖g1) 23.♘xg6 ♗xg5 (23...♘f3+ runs into 24.♔h1, a typical engine solution, which is not very easy to find in a game, or at least it was not obvious to me) 24.♖xc7 ♖f2 25.♕xh5 ♘f3+ 26.♕xf3 ♖xf3 27.♗b1!!, not an easy move to see in advance;

C) 21...gxh2+ 22.♔xh2;

D) 21...♕d8 22.♖xh7 ♗xg5 23.♘xg6. The black pieces are too far from the attack. 23...♕f6 (23...♔xh7 24.♕xh5+ ♔g7 25.♗xg5) 24.♘e7+! (a beautiful check that leads to a win in a few moves) 24...♔f8 (24...♔xh7 25.e5+) 25.♗xg5 ♕xg5 26.♖f1+ ♔e8 27.♘d5 gxh2+ 28.♔xh2 ♕g3+ 29.♔h1 ♕h3+ 30.♔g1, and wins.



21...♗xg5?! I had underestimated 21...♘xd2! 22.♘h6+ (22.♕xd2 gxf5 23.♖xf5 ♘g7 and Black wins; 22.♘xf7 gxh2+ 23.♕xh2 ♔xf7) 22...♔h8!, when I have no more than a draw: 23.♘hxf7+ ♔g8 24.♘h6+ (as 24.♕xd2 ♗xg5 25.♕xg5 gxh2+ 26.♔xh2 ♖f8 is unclear), with a draw.

22.♗xg5 f6

The most natural move. Black is two pawns up but has an incredibly exposed king.

22...gxf5 would open the king up too much: 23.♕xh5 ♘xb2 24.♕h6, and it will be mate soon!: 24...f6 25.♗xf6 ♗c8 26.♖f3, killing.

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At the prize-giving Boris Gelfand thanked his family and friends world-wide for keeping him going with e-mails of support.

Also 22...gxh2+ 23.♕xh2 would open up the kingside too much. 22...♔h8 23.♘h6 f6 24.♖xf6, with a huge attack.

23.♗h4

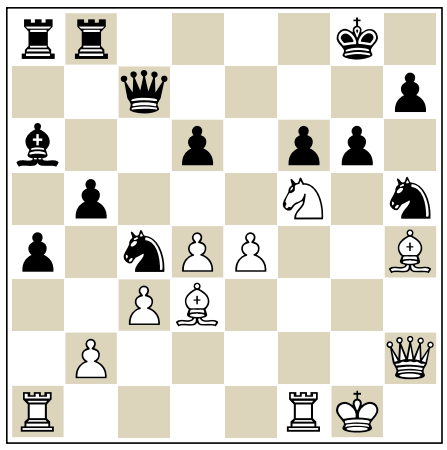
At this point I had 18 minutes left, against Black's 12, so I preferred to keep the tension.

23...gxh2+

If 23...♖f8, 24.hxg3, with a huge attack.

24.♕xh2

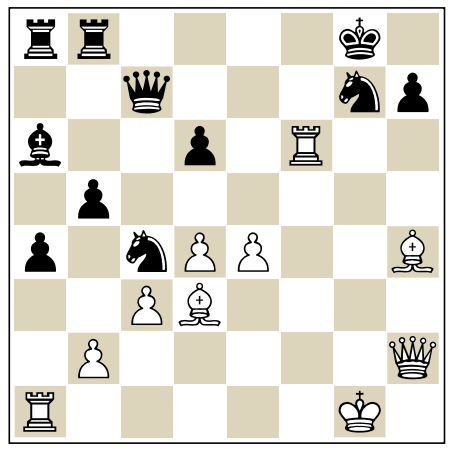
After taking with the queen I have a new idea: ♗e2, trying to eliminate the h5 knight from the defence!



24...♖f8?

When new ideas come into a position and the players are short of time, it very often happens that mistakes arise and that one follows the other.

Now that the queen has left the e2-square, Black should have taken the knight: 24...gxf5! 25.♖xf5 ♘g7 (25...♕f7 26.♔h1, with a strong attack) 26.♖xf6. During the game I had the feeling that this was extremely dangerous for Black, which is true. But after the following great move, obviously an engine move, Black will most likely be better:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

26...b4!! (26...♖f8 would be the human move, but after 27.♖h6 the attack is still unpleasant and play might continue as follows: 27...♕d7 28.♕g2 ♘e3 29.e5! ♘xg2 30.♗xh7+ ♔f7 31.♗g6+ ♔e6 32.♗e4+ ♔f7 33.♗g6+, a nice draw) 27.e5 ♘xe5 28.♗xa6 (28.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 29.dxe5 ♔g8) 28...bxc3 29.bxc3 ♕xc3 30.♕a2+ ♔h8 31.dxe5 ♕d4+ 32.♗f2 ♕xe5, and on the next move

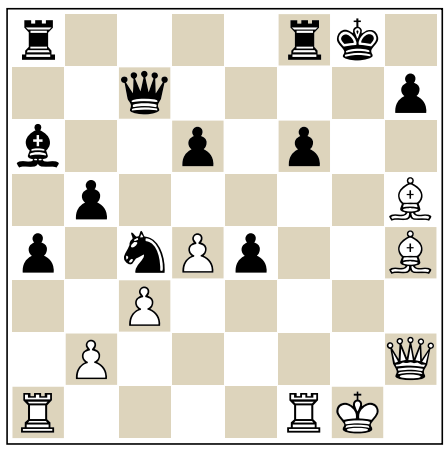
Black takes back material and will remain three pawns up.
Also good was 24...b4 (a counterattack is the best defence!) 25.♗xf6 ♘xf6 26.♘h6+ ♔g7 27.♖xf6 ♖f8 28.♘g4.

25.♗e2 gxf5?

One move too late. 25...♘d2! was again the best move, with a counterattack: 26.♗xh5 ♘xf1 27.♕g2 (27.♖xf1 b4! is very unpleasant for White) 27...♔h8 28.♗xg6, with a very unclear position. Here Black has many options to choose from, ...♘e3 or...♘d2, and ...b4 is always a move which has to checked.

26.♗xh5 fxe4?

This final mistake exposes the king so much that it ends up in real danger! Black should always look for counterplay instead of defensive moves.
Best was 26...♕g7+ 27.♔h1 ♗b7, forcing 28.d5 and creating a stable square for the knight on e5: 28...♕e7!?, with complications, e.g. 29.♖ae1 fxe4 30.♕g2+ ♔h8 31.♖xe4 ♘e5 32.♖ef4 ♘d7.



27.♕f4!!

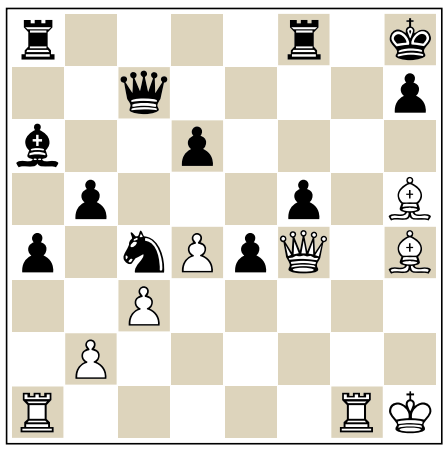
When I saw this move, I did not even ask myself whether it was the best. The queen can attack from h6.
I didn't really like 27.♗xf6, e.g. 27...♖xf6 28.♖xf6 ♕g7+ 29.♕g2 ♕xg2+ 30.♔xg2 ♘xb2.

27...f5 Or 27...♕g7+ 28.♔h2 ♔h8 29.♖g1 ♕e7 30.♖af1, with ♕h6 next and a deadly attack.

28.♔h1

At this point I felt that things were really going my way.

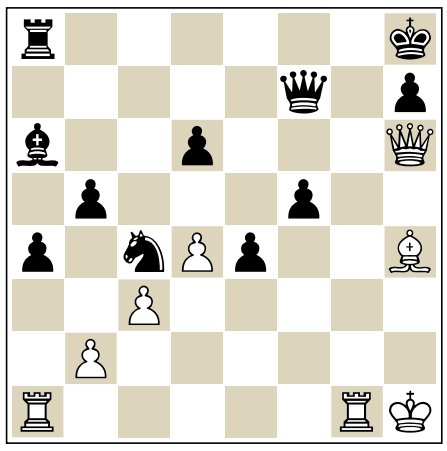
28...♔h8 29.♖g1



29...♖f7

One minute left on Black's clock and he found nothing better than this.
During the game I thought 29...♘b6 was the best defence, but it would not have been enough to save the game either: 29...♘b6 30.♕h6 ♘d5 31.♖g2, and Black can't do anything against the mating attack on the g-file and the bishop pair: 31...f4 32.♖ag1 ♕d7 33.♗g4 ♕g7 34.♕xg7+ ♔xg7 35.♗e6+ ♔h8 36.♗xd5. I had seen all this up to this point.

30.♗xf7 ♕xf7 31.♕h6



Here my heart was beating faster ☺.

31...♖f8 32.♖g6

The game is over. Black resigned.
I can't say this was the best game I have ever played, but when Boris resigned I felt extremely happy for two reasons. Firstly I had managed to equalize the match against the top-seeded player of the World Cup, and secondly, I felt that I had won in very entertaining style.

NOTES BY
Wesley So

FR 4.4 – C11
Gata Kamsky
Wesley So
Khanty-Mansiysk 2009 (3.1)

This game was played after my rather surprising match against Vasily Ivanchuk, which I unexpectedly managed to win. I then spent the next rest day sleeping inside the hotel room, as it was very cold in Khanty and it was no fun to go outside (imagine the Olympiad next year, which will be held at the same place!).
Before this game I considered my chances to win the match against Kamsky to be quite small, as he is a very experienced player and, after all, he is the defending champion of this event! (In fact, before this game me and other Filipino players in the event were joking that we'd be at least able to leave cold Khanty sooner if I lost ☺)
Anyway, for this first game I decided to try and not to lose with black, as it is essentially very difficult to bounce back in such cases in a short match, even if you are White in the second game. I thought that if I managed to hold this game, then I would at least be able to reach the tie-break!

1.e4

As expected, my opponent goes for this first move, which he also played in his previous matches against Antonio and Zhou Weiqi.

1...e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6

This must have come as a bit of a surprise to my opponent, as in my match against Ivanchuk I played 3...♗b4, which I expected him to be well prepared for.

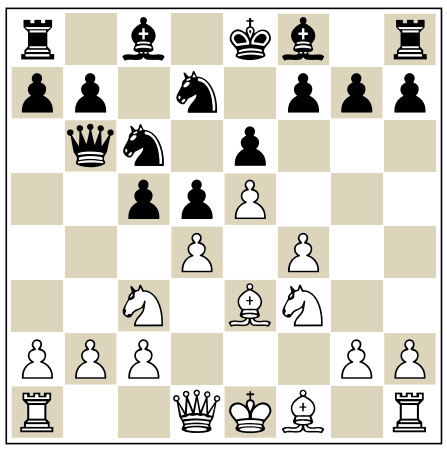
4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗e3 ♕b6!?

Another surprise, after which my opponent thought for a long time. It is quite surprising that strong grandmasters nowadays usually

ILYA ODESSKY

Sixteen-year-old Wesly So (r.) could not have dreamt that he would knock out both Vasily Ivanchuk and Gata Kamsky.

prefer 7...♗e7 or 7...a6 (actually I played 7...a6 against GM Hou Yifan a few months ago and had a new idea in mind, but my strong opponent completely refuted my opening strategy with natural moves), but if you check some lines with Rybka, after 7...♕b6 or even 7...cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♕b6 9.♕d2 ♕xb2 10.♖b1 ♕a3 11.♗b5 Black appears to be doing very well in these complications. Perhaps this trend will change in the future.

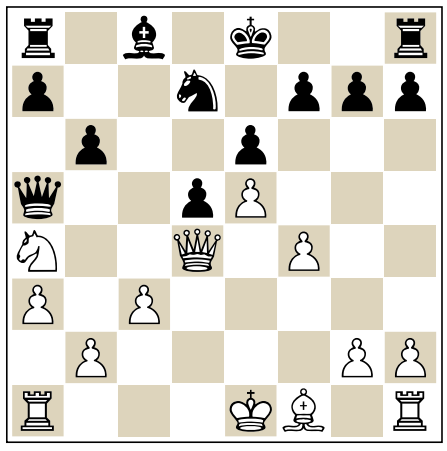


8.a3

Played after a 22-minute think. This move (preventing Black's threat of 8...♕xb2, as after 9.♘a4 the queen is trapped) is quite understandable, as it aims for a solid game without too much risk, although White's chances for an advantage are lessened as well. The best try for White is 8.♘a4 ♕a5+ 9.c3, after which both 9...c4 10.b4 ♘xb4!? and 9...cxd4 10.b4 ♘xb4! give Black good compensation for the piece. Readers interested in these lines could do worse than spending some time looking at the positions with the computer ☺.

8...cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♗c5 10.♘a4 ♕a5+ 11.c3 ♗xd4 12.♗xd4 ♘xd4 13.♕xd4 b6

Uptil now I hadn't used much time, as I was playing quickly in order to show that I still was in my preparations. My opponent's next move was quite unexpected, although it came as a pleasant surprise!



14.♗e2

This looks a bit slow and it gives me chances for an initiative.

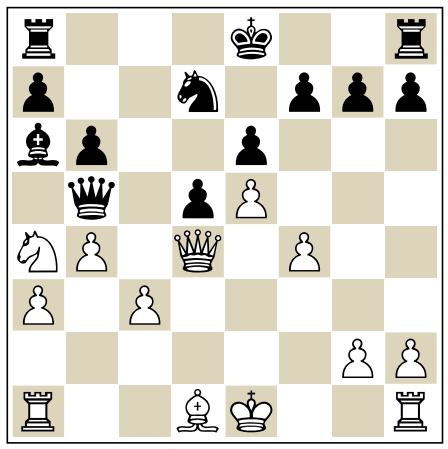
The main line is 14.♕b4, although I don't think Black should have any problems either after 14...♕xb4 15.axb4 ♔e7 16.♗b5 ♗b7, when White's knight on a4 is badly placed and will take some time to be reactivated, while Black intends a quick ...f6, or even ...g5 in some lines, which will open the centre in his favour.

14...♗a6 15.♗d1

White has no choice but to carry on with this plan (which I really don't understand. I mean: where is White's bishop actually going?), although now it is even difficult for him to castle kingside.

Instead, a worse version of the queen exchange is 15.♕b4 ♕xb4 16.axb4 ♗xe2 17.♔xe2 ♔e7, when ...g7-g5 and ...f7-f6 are coming very fast, and Black is already slightly better.

15...♕b5 16.b4



16...♖c8

Afterwards, I found out that this position had already occurred in a game between Alekseev and Ivanchuk in 2005. It continued 16...0-0 17.♘b2 ♕c6 18.♗a4 ♗b5 19.♗xb5 ♕xb5 20.c4 dxc4 21.♕xc4 ♕xc4 22.♘xc4 g5!? and soon ended in a draw. But what I played was quite obvious and strong, and doesn't need much analysis either.

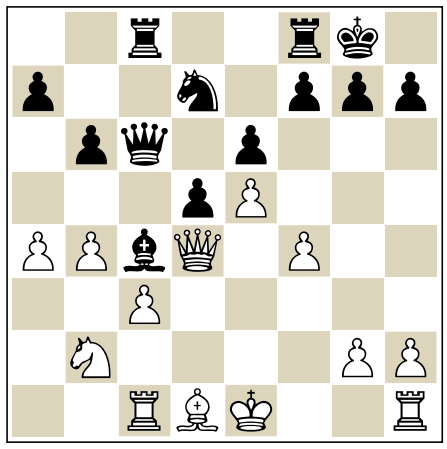
17.♘b2 ♕c6 18.♖c1 0-0

Compared to the Alekseev-Ivanchuk game, it is clear that the inclusion of ♖c1 and ...♖c8 is in my favour, and White must continue carefully as his king is stuck in the centre.

19.a4 ♗c4

The computer suggests that 19...♕c7, intending ...f6, is even

more accurate, followed by 20.b5 (after 20.♗g4 ♔h8! Black again threatens ...f6, while White still cannot castle) 20...♗b7 21.0-0 ♘c5 22.♗c2 ♘e4, with a strong initiative. The computer may be correct, but during the game I wasn't so eager to remove my bishop from its strong position on the a6-f1 diagonal.

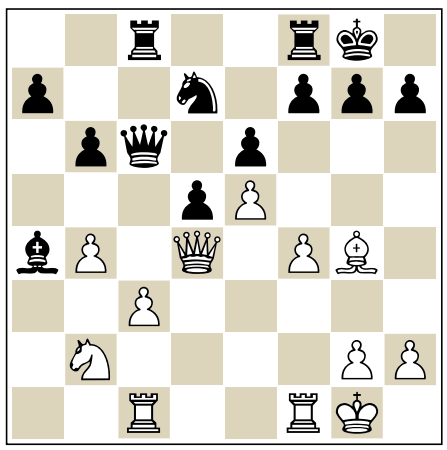


20.♗g4 In order to prevent my ...f7-f6 break. During the game I also thought that this was his best move, but he used a lot of time for it and it is clear that he was in some time-trouble – he only had about 25 minutes around this point to get to move 40.

20...♗b3

I could not see another plan for me apart from going for his a-pawn, as ...f7-f6 is now prevented. However, it is even more accurate to start with 20...a5!, as White still cannot castle and Black simply threatens ...♗b3. It is not clear what he can do – maybe ♔f2 and manual castling, but this is obviously much better for me.

21.0-0 ♗xa4

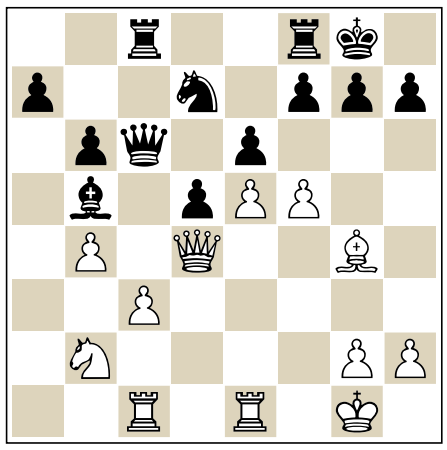


22.f5?!

A mistake that allows me to gain a clear advantage. Of course it is logical, and quite attractive as well, in this type of pawn structure to simply push the f-pawn all the way to f5, but that does not work here.

White could have balanced the game with 22.♘xa4 ♕xa4 23.♖a1 ♕c2 24.♖xa7 ♖c4 (24...♖fd8 25.f5! also manages to equalize), and now I had missed 25.♕d1! ♕xd1 26.♗xd1 ♖d8 27.♖b7, when White should not lose.

22...♗b5 23.♖fe1



Here my opponent offered a draw. However, he was in time-trouble (about 18 minutes left for 17 moves), which is why I did not even consider accepting it.

Even worse for White is 23.♖f3?! f6! 24.fxe6 ♘xe5 25.♖g3 ♘xg4 26.♕xg4 ♖c7, and Black is winning.

23...♖fe8?!

However, I replied to his offer with a highly inaccurate move, which could have made my technical task much more difficult.

It is better for Black to continue with 23...♔h8!, removing the king from the dangers on the a2-g8 diagonal and intending to meet 24.♗f3 with 24...♕c7 25.fxe6 fxe6, and compared to the game White no longer has ♗xd5 tricks here.

Also slow is 24.♖e3, which is met by 24...a5! 25.♖d1 axb4 26.cxb4 ♕c2, when Black's counterplay on the queenside is clearly faster than White's initiative on the other wing.

24.♖e3?

But he replied with a mistake as well! I don't know if he simply missed my reply, but it is clear that this cannot be recommended.

Much more tenacious was 24.♗f3!, when he is suddenly threatening 25.c4, and ...f7-f6 is no longer possible as well. After 24...♗c4 (24...♕c7 25.fxe6 fxe6 is met by 26.♗xd5! and that is why 23...♔h8 was more accurate) 25.♖a1 a6 26.♘xc4 ♕xc4 27.♕xc4 ♖xc4 28.♖xa6 ♖xc3 29.♖a7 Black's advantage is reduced to a minimum.

Sven Römling (German 2nd league player) qualified translator and interpreter

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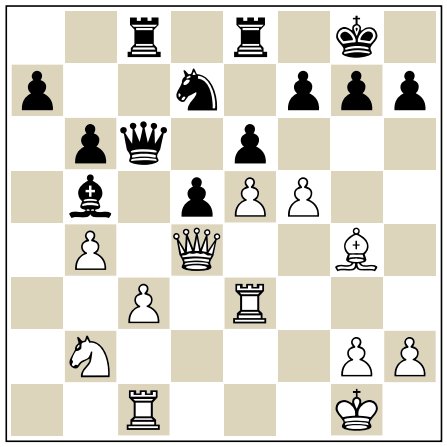
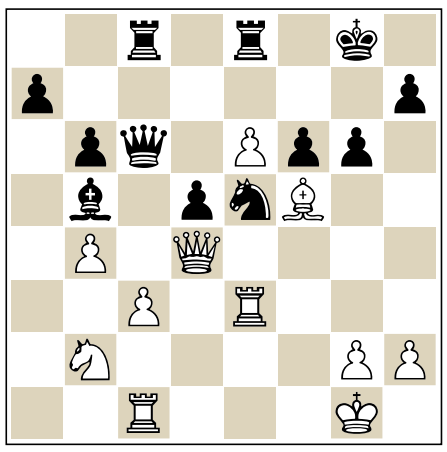


24...f6! Now Black has a large advantage and his position is easier to handle.

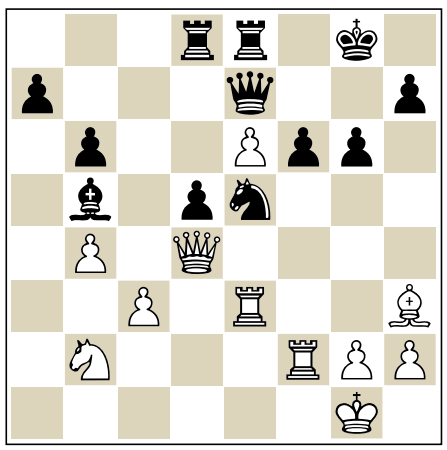
25.fxe6 When Gata played 24.♖e3, he probably missed some lines after 25.exf6 e5! 26.♗h5 ♖e7! 27.f7+ ♔f8 28.♕d1 ♘f6, when Black is almost winning. Indeed, some tactics are difficult to calculate, especially under time-pressure.

25...♘xe5 26.♗f5 g6



27.♗h3 27.♖g3, which at least creates more threats on the kingside, may be slightly better, but after 27...♖c7!, defending the seventh rank, Black has nothing to fear.

27...♕d6 28.♖d1 ♖cd8 29.♖d2 ♕e7 30.♖f2



KHANTY-MANSIYSK

Khanty-Mansiysk 2009

7 Rounds of knock-out

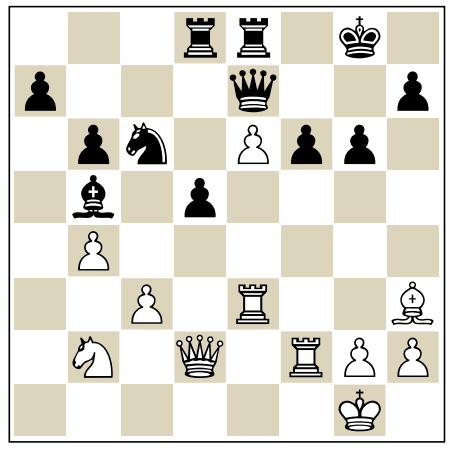
Round 3	
Gelfand-Polgar	3½-1½
Li Chao-Gashimov	1½-3½
Svidler-Naiditsch	5-3
Bologan-Laznicka	1½-3½
Sakaev-Vitiugov	½-1½
Kamsky-So	½-1½
Ponomariov-Motylev	1½-½
Jobava-Grischuk	3-5
Yakovenko-Areschenko	4-2
Bacrot-Wang Yue	3½-1½
Eljanov-Malakhov	1-4
Navara-Karjakin	1-4
Mamedyarov-Wang Hao	1½-½
Tomashevsky-Shirov	½-1½
Caruana-Alekseev	3½-2½
Vachier-Lagrave-Yu Yangyi	1½-½
Round 4	
Vachier-Lagrave-Gelfand	3½-4½
Gashimov-Caruana	3½-1½
Shirov-Svidler	½-1½
Laznicka-Mamedyarov	½-1½
Karjakin-Vitiugov	1½-½
So-Malakhov	1-4
Bacrot-Ponomariov	2½-3½
Grischuk-Yakovenko	3-5
Round 5	
Gelfand-Yakovenko	3½-1½
Ponomariov-Gashimov	3½-1½
Svidler-Malakhov	½-1½
Karjakin-Mamedyarov	1½-½
Round 6	
Karjakin-Gelfand	0-2
Ponomariov-Malakhov	4-2
Round 7 Final	
Ponomariov-Gelfand	5-7

30...♘c6!

I was playing my moves quite quickly in order to put pressure on him, as he had less than 10 minutes now to make it to the time-control, while I still had about 50. Now White has a difficult choice.

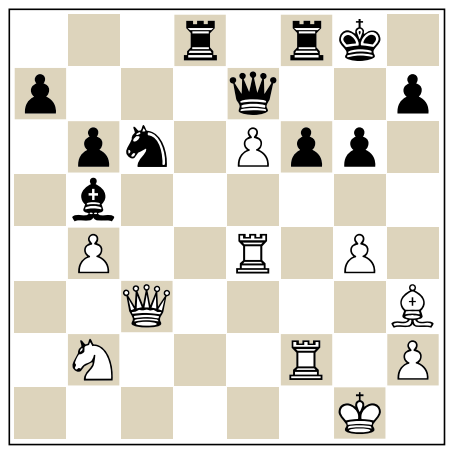
31.♕d2

I think better was 31.♕xf6, although White is probably still lost after 31...♕xf6 32.♖xf6 d4 33.♖g3 dxc3 34.♖xc3, and now the accurate 34...♖e7! which I did not see during the game but which was given by the computer afterwards.



31...d4 32.♖e4 dxc3 33.♕xc3 ♖f8 34.g4

Desperation, although there is nothing better, as I am threatening ...f6-f5.



34...♖d6

Now the e-pawn falls, and Black is simply two pawns up. All I have to do is play carefully.

35.♗g2 ♘e5 36.g5 ♖xe6 37.gxf6 ♖fxf6 38.♖xf6 ♕xf6 39.♖e3 ♗c6 40.♘d1 ♕g5 41.♖g3 ♕f4 42.♘f2 ♗xg2 43.♔xg2 ♘c4 44.♕d3 ♘e3+ 45.♔g1 ♘f5 46.♕d5 ♕c1+ 47.♘d1 ♔f7 48.♖c3 ♕g5+ 49.♔f2 ♕f4+ 50.♔g2 ♕g4+ 51.♔f2 ♕e2+ 52.♔g1 ♕e1+ 53.♔g2 ♔g7

White resigned.

My next opponent in the tournament was Vladimir Malakhov, so I thought I had some chances in the match but I underestimated him in the rapid tie-breaks and lost convincingly. Anyway, I'll just try to prepare harder for the next World Cup ☺.

Roulette Chess

Artist and curator Larry List and WGM Jennifer Shahade cannot wait to set their 'wheel of fortune' spinning.

Long before blitz playoffs, chess 960, final round Swiss pairings and the illustrious chess/poker career path, the random had its role in chess. In ancient variants of chess, the throw of a die determined which piece would move.

Jennifer Shahade

In 2009, artist and curator Larry List and I circled back in developing roulette chess. We debuted the game at the Chance Aesthetics show at the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum in Saint Louis, which coincided with the 2009 US Women's Championship. List and I were both inspired by Marcel Duchamp's wish that 'chess and chance meet in the middle.' As List refined the look and spin of the wheel, I calibrated the right balance of luck and skill in the rules; when I assigned mostly just one chess piece to each spoke, I lost the first two games to my boyfriend (a complete chess amateur), so I tweaked. The final product includes two pieces on most spokes (If you spin on a spoke with a pawn and a rook, you choose any pawn or rook move.) The pieces are allocated according to their frequency. Three green spokes allow you to move any piece you want while there is one equivalent to the dreaded 00, when your opponent chooses the piece you move. Rules that wouldn't be obvious to a chess player include:

No Legal Moves: If a player's spin doesn't allow any legal moves (either because of immobility, or be-

cause the player has lost or traded all of that type of piece), the player must look at the color of the spoke they have landed on. If the player is playing with the red pieces, and landed on a red spoke, she chooses which piece to move. If the player landed on the opposite colored-spoke, her opponent chooses which type of piece she must move.

Mating Material: If a player has mating material and has eliminated all of her opponent's pieces, she wins without having to checkmate her opponent.

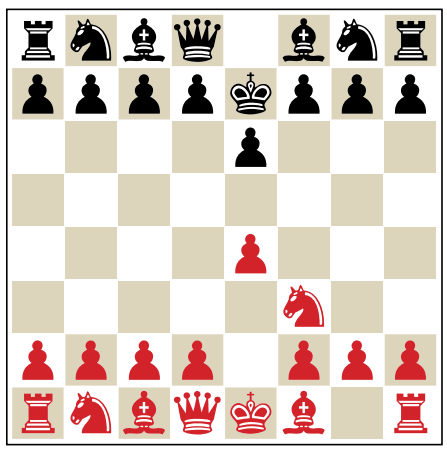
The debut of roulette chess saw philanthropist and Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis founder Rex Sinquefield (also my student, about 1700 USCF) facing IM Anna Zatonskih. Zatonskih had just bum rushed through the US Women's Championship posting 8½/9, a 2765 FIDE performance and earning a record grand prize of $15,000. In Rex and Anna's roulette chess game, fortunes seesawed, with Rex taking an early lead, until the game was agreed drawn in a knight vs. pawns endgame. This put Rex in the elite company of WGM Camilla Baginskaite, the only other player to score against Anna in Saint Louis (Anna also went 5-0 in a pre-tournament blindfold simul).

But some of the most amusing roulette chess games took place in the lab, like the following against my father, FM Mike Shahade.

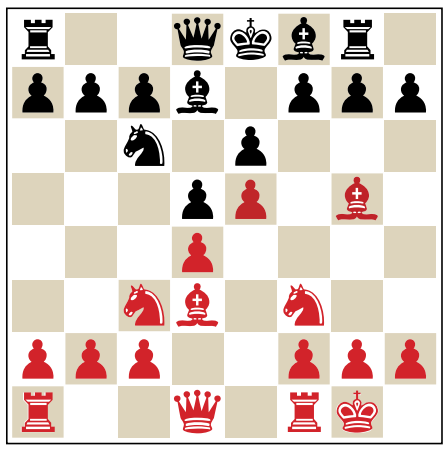
Michael Shahade
Jennifer Shahade
roulette chess

1.e4 *(Pawn or Bishop)*
The parenthetical annotation will tell you which pieces we had to choose between for each move.

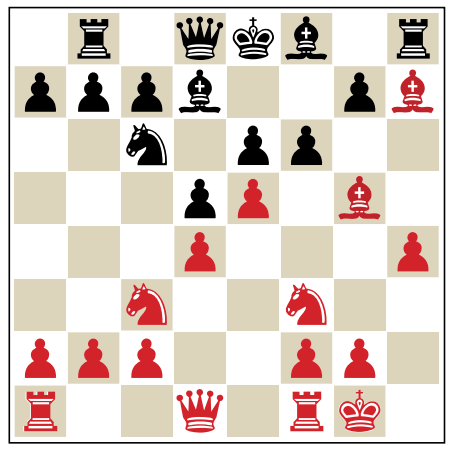
1...e6 *(You Choose)*
I landed on 'You Choose' and played 1...e6 because the f7-square is vulnerable in roulette chess, just like in bughouse. It's not always easy to stop the four-move mate when the wheel dictates which piece you can move.
2.♘f3 *(Knight or Bishop)* **♔e7** *(King)*
I was unfortunately forced to choose an unorthodox variation of the French.



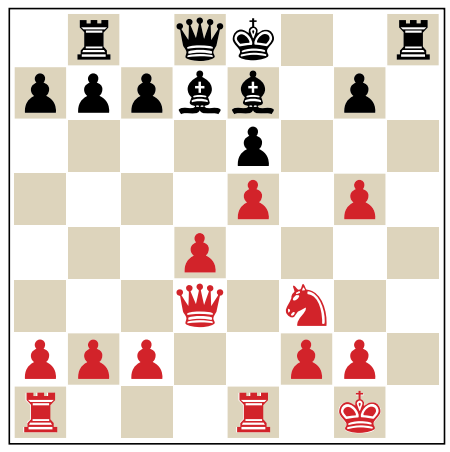
3.d4 *(Bishop or Pawn)* **♘f6** *(Knight or Queen)* **4.e5** *(Pawn or Knight)* **♘e4** *(Knight or Bishop)* **5.♗d3** *(Bishop or Knight)* **♖g8** *(Rook)* **6.♗xe4** *(Bishop or King)* **d5** *(You Choose)* **7.♗d3** *(Bishop or King)* **♘c6** *(Knight or Rook)* **8.♘c3** *(Knight)* **♗d7** *(Bishop)* **9.♗g5+** *(Bishop or Pawn)* **♔e8** *(Queen or Bishop - Black Square: Black Chooses)* **10.0-0** *(King or Rook)*
Castling is permitted by spinning either a king or a rook.



10...♖b8? *(King)*
I can't move my king, and the spoke was red, in which case the rules state that my opponent can choose what type of piece to move. In this case, I was told to move my rook. But ....♖b8 is a bad mistake. Much better is...♖h8, defending the h7 pawn for later.
11.h4 *(Pawn)* **f6** *(Pawn or King)*
12.♗xh7 *(You Choose)* **♖h8** *(Rook)*



After a wretched start, Black is on a rush of lucky spins.
13.♖e1 *(Rook)*
Spinning a bishop or pawn would be preferable, but getting his last piece into the game also helps Red. Tal's famous quote, 'They can only take them one at a time!' certainly applies to roulette chess.
13...♖xh7 *(Rook)* **14.♘xd5** *(Knight or Rook)* **fxg5** *(Knight or Pawn)* **15.♕d3** *(Pawn or Queen)* **♘e7** *(Knight or Queen)* **16.♘xe7** *(Bishop or Knight)* **♗xe7** *(Pawn or Bishop)* **17.hxg5** *(pawn or king)* **♖h8** *(Pawn or Rook)*



After a bizarre series of trades, Red has compensation for a piece. His 18th spin allowed him to choose his move here.
18.♕g6+?! *(You Choose)*

BETSY DYNAKO

The debut of roulette chess at the US championships in St. Louis ended in a draw between women's champion Anna Zatonskih and chess benefactor Rex Sinquefield.

Mixing it up when you're losing but protecting your pieces when you're doing well is key in roulette chess. The side with fewer pieces and development should be willing to take risks, for example, going for unlikely mates in two. Since Red is doing quite well here, he should avoid making moves that make it too easy for Black to take his pieces. In this vein, ♕g6+ is wrong. True, Red could spin two rooks in a row and play ♖e4-f4. But if he doesn't get so lucky, the queen on g6 can be attacked easily and without risk. Pawns are the most frequent spin in roulette chess, so 18.d5 is the most dangerous move. If a red pawn reaches e6, the rewards of ♕g6+ will outweigh the risks. 18.d5 is also a strong move in real chess!

18...♔f8 *(Forced)* **19.♔f1** *(King)* **♗e8** *(Bishop or Pawn)*

According to plan, but I still need to spin another bishop to complete the operation.

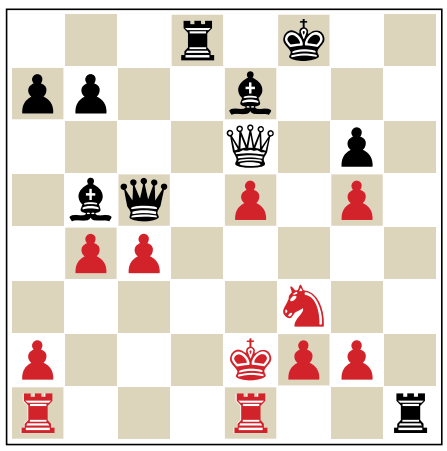
20.c3 *(Pawn or Knight)* **c5** *(Knight or Pawn)* **21.dxc5** *(Pawn or Bishop)* **♖h1+** *(Rook)* **22.♘g1** *(Knight or Rook)* **♕c7** *(Rook or Queen)* **23.♕xe6** *(You Choose)* **g6** *(Pawn or King)* **24.♔e2** *(They Choose)*

Luck continues to spin in Black's favor. Red lands on a black spoke with a knight, and because he no longer has any knights, Black chooses the piece he must move, in this case the king.

24...♖d8! *(Rook or Queen)*

...♖xg1 was tempting, but cutting off the king makes ...♗b5+ potentially devastating.

25.♘f3 *(You Choose)* **♕xc5** *(Queen or Knight)* **26.b4** *(Bishop or Pawn)* **♗b5+** *(Bishop or Pawn)* **27.c4** *(You Choose)*

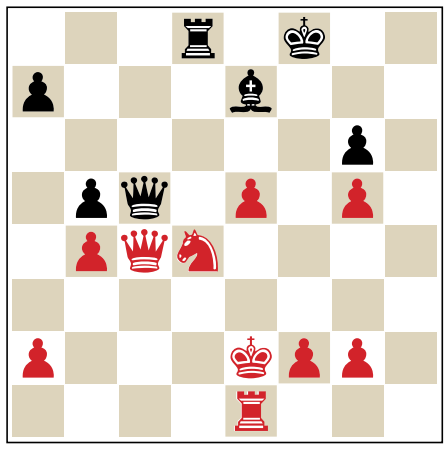


The game is not in the bag yet-spinning a pawn or a king could still ruin things.

27...♗xc4+ *(Bishop or King)* **28.♕xc4** *(Red Chooses)* **b5** *(Pawn or Bishop)*

Sharply increasing the odds of winning red's queen.

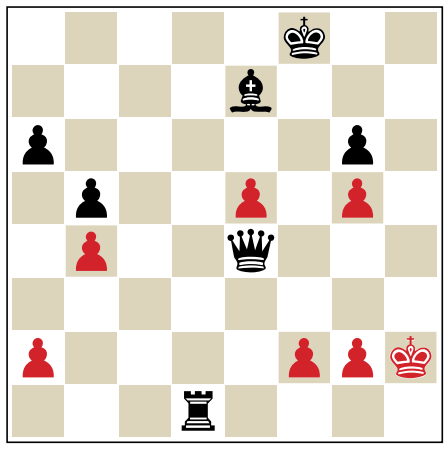
29.♘d4 *(Knight)* **♖xe1+** *(Rook or Knight)* **30.♖xe1** *(Black Chooses)*



30...♕xc4+ *(Rook or Queen)*

The queen standstill is finally resolved and Red is busted. Well, he's busted a very large percentage of the time.

31.♔f3 *(Red Chooses)* **♖xd4** *(Rook)* **32.♔g3** *(King or Bishop)* **♖d3+** *(You Choose)* **33.♔h2** *(King)* **a6** *(Pawn)* **34.♖e4** *(You Choose)* **♕xe4** *(Queen)* **35.♔g1** *(King or Bishop)* **♖d1+** *(You Choose)* **36.♔h2** *(Forced)*



36...♕h4+ *(Queen)* **0-1**

In roulette chess the question of 'What is the Best Move?' often turns into, 'What will make the most interesting game?' Your pieces and plans are always at stake, but your ego is protected – you can blame mistakes and misfortunes alike on the wheel. Just don't lose your house on side-bets on the knight.

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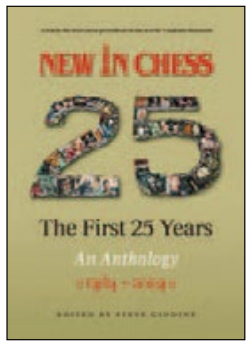

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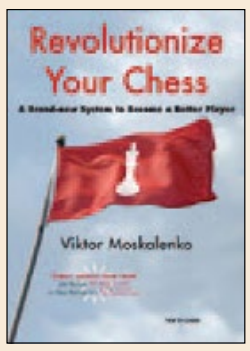

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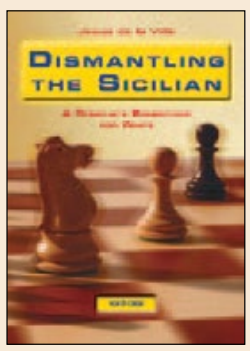

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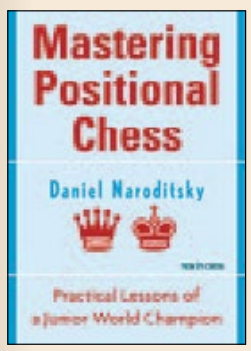

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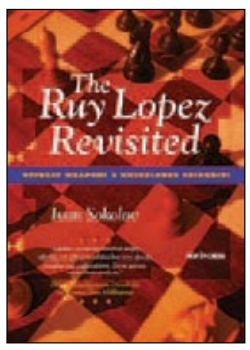

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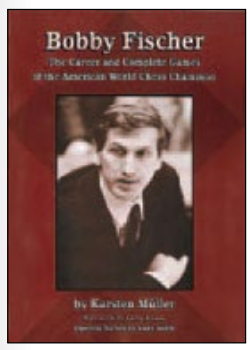

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Alexander Grischuk, yet another new champion in Russian Super Final

Alexander Grischuk crowned a successful year that already included victories in Linares and Mainz with a sweeping victory at the 2009 Russian Super Final. Displaying unbelievably confident and high-quality play the Muscovite deservedly took his first national title. In the five years of its existence the Super Final has developed its own traditions (one of them is that no one has yet managed to win it twice) and who could be a better guide to its unwritten rules and peculiarities than **Mark Glukhovsky**, the editor-in-chief of Russia's most revered chess periodical '64'.

Legend has it that after he managed to get out of Soviet Russia, Alexander Alekhine foresaw not only the coming severity of the regime in the USSR, but also the flourishing of abstract types of intellectual activity like chess, music and maths that accompanied it. I recalled the prediction of the eccentric Russian genius when I was travelling by car past the frozen fields and hopelessly melancholy villages of Vladimir Oblast. That morning I had dropped off my sons at the out-of-town school of mathematics and was rushing back to Moscow to get there in time for the New Year's blitz championship at the Moscow Conservatoire. Later I realized that in the space of one day I'd been lucky enough to see everything good that modern-day Russia has taken from the Soviet Union: the remnants of the superb mathematical education (towards which my children aren't indifferent), and also top, world-class musicians passionately playing blitz chess.

The Soviet Union is no more, and the phenomenon of its chess has receded into the past. Many fans live in today's Russia, like abandoned wives, yearning for yesterday. Despite the fact that fantastic events are taking place under their noses, many prefer to sigh about the lost greatness. Meanwhile, the current Russian Championship system, which was introduced in 2004 by Alexander Bakh, the executive director of the Russian Chess Federation, to a

New Russian champion Alexander Grischuk. A deep and self-critical player, 'who can solve problems at the level of Kasparov, Kramnik or Anand'.

MARIA FOMINYKH

large extent copies the Soviet system – with the amendments of an overall speeding-up and material incentives. The prize-fund for the men's tournament, depending on the dollar exchange rate (which in turn depends on the price of oil) – is 100-200,000 dollars, and the champion of the country received around 30,000 dollars in this crisis year. Women's chess labour, in violation of the constitution, is valued two to three times lower.

As before, the supply of strong grandmasters is huge in Russia, so it isn't easy to get into the final of the national championship. There are three ways to do this: win one of the prizes in the previous Super Final, become one of the top three grandmasters in Russia by rating (i.e. have around 2730 Elo points) or take one of the six qualifying places in the top division of the country's championship. If the first two methods don't suit you, then as long as you have a rating of at least 2550, you'll have to enter the incredibly tough 11-round Swiss (one rest day), in which about 50 decent grandmasters will be playing alongside you.

In the five years of its existence the Super Final has developed its own traditions, with which I would like to acquaint readers before I tell you about the latest tournament. Kramnik, as a rule, doesn't play in the national championship, so the three guaranteed rating places are usually taken by Svidler, Morozevich and Grischuk. There are a couple of other certain participants in the tournament – Yakovenko and Alekseev – who either have a high rating or a prize place in the previous championship, or both. One other place remains that can be claimed by a strong 2700+ player or someone who performed successfully in the previous tournament – 'just a strong grandmaster'.

Having said that, it's curious that the circle of players who come out of the top division, despite the theory of probability, is also extremely limited: year after year grandmasters Vitiugov, Tomashevsky and Timofeev emerge from the qualifying hell into the purgatory of the Super Final; Inarkiev, Riazantsev and Khismatullin qualify less often, but still regularly. Young talents appear periodically – last year these were

Ian Nepomniachtchi and Ildar Khairullin, and this year Sanan Sjugirov.

Morozevich as well as Kramnik declined to participate in the tournament in 2009, so the organizers made the decision to limit it to ten players. Thus, to the qualifiers Tomashevsky, Vitiugov, Timofeev, Riazantsev, Khismatullin and Sjugirov were added five-time national champion Svidler, last year's prize-winners Yakovenko and Alekseev, and also Alexander Grischuk. The women's system is similar, and this year a group of ten participants was also formed, but I'll tell you about them in more detail at the end of the article.

Another Super Final tradition is that no one has yet managed to win it twice. Kasparov won the very first tournament in 2004 – this was his penultimate tournament and the last title he hadn't won. After that the champions were Sergey Rublevsky, Evgeny Alekseev, Alexander Morozevich and Peter Svidler. On top of that Dmitry Yakovenko and Alexander Grischuk took second place twice. Before the start of the tournament it also made sense to look for a potential winner from that very threesome – Svidler, Grischuk and Yakovenko.

I'll say right away that before play started I saw Alexander Grischuk as a potential champion. I'm writing that not only to boast about my intuition, but also just because there was objective data about him. Grischuk had had an excellent year, winning in Linares and in Mainz, and was solidly good in other tournaments. Svidler was also exceptionally good, but the theory of probability wasn't on his side – Peter wasn't only a five-time champion but also the current one. Yakovenko began the year strikingly, but after his wedding the ominous 'Khalifman Rule' started working against him, according to which after finding marital bliss a grandmaster loses 50 or even 100 rating points in six months.

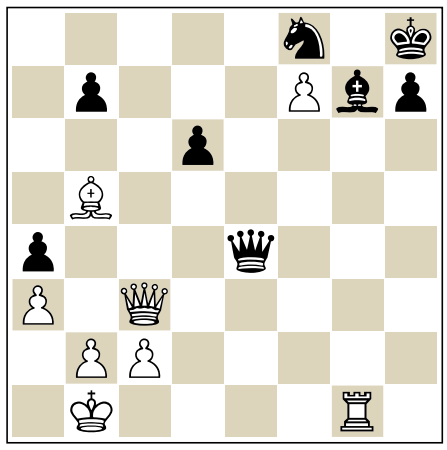
Grischuk won, displaying unbelievably confident and high-quality play. He was lucky with the draw, but he wiped out the advantage of his extra game as White by his own hand, concocting a 16-move 'grandmaster' draw with his colleague Denis Khismatullin (Grischuk is a man of his word!). In the remaining eight Alexander won all his games as White. Let's have a look at how this went.

He overcame European champion Evgeny Tomashevsky in a sticky positional battle in the Anti-Marshall, making the most of his extra pawn on the 75th move.

He beat Alexander Riazantsev by sacrificing the exchange on move 11 (see his own notes to this game) and mated the young Sanan Sjugirov beautifully and quickly in a Sicilian. Here's the final position:

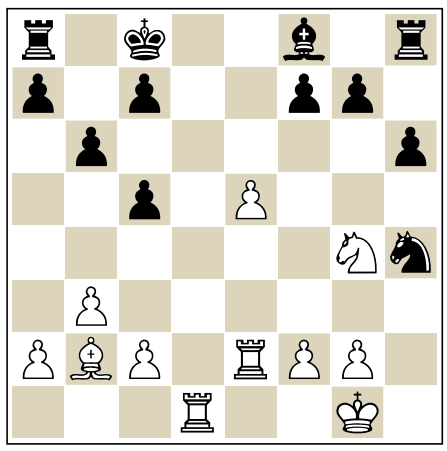
MARK GLUKHOVSKY

The Marshall in his game against main rival Peter Svidler, Alexander Grischuk had prepared at home up to perpetual check.



Grischuk-Sjugirov
final position after 32.♖g1

The most important game for the outcome of the championship was the one with Yakovenko, in which Alexander demonstrated deep preparation and subtle play in the ending.



Grischuk-Yakovenko
position after 20.♘g4!

It's hard to believe, but 20.♘g4! is a strong and dangerous novelty, after which Black couldn't cope with the difficulties that arose. It was by this apparently vegetarian method that Grischuk wrought

revenge on his team-mate for knocking him out in the quarter-final of the World Cup.

Drawing a conclusion I can say that the new national champion has excellent technique, a high level of chess culture, superb calculation and deep opening preparation in his arsenal – a frightening combination, so to say. As Black Grischuk suffered serious difficulties only once – in his game with Timofeev – and in the other encounters he easily equalized, including in the crucial duel with Svidler. His opening preparation in the Marshall turned out to be better than his opponent's – the variation that occurred in the game had been analysed at home up to perpetual check.

Grischuk usually plays unhurriedly – on the contrary, he often falls asleep in the opening. He's quite capable of spending up to 40 minutes in a well-known position, getting into it at the board, trying to sense all its subtleties. He's a very deep and self-critical player, and to a question about his best game he replies that it hasn't been played yet. In the words of Yury Razuvaev, Grischuk is an excellent analyst who can solve problems at the level of Kasparov, Kramnik or Anand. Alexander often finds himself in time-trouble, but, as one of the strongest blitz players in the world, he isn't afraid of a lack of time – on the contrary, he acts very resourcefully in these conditions. He's young, healthy, ingenious; he seems happy, and, without doubt, remains the most promising Russian grandmaster who could shoot for the crown, not counting Kramnik. Nevertheless, the next World Championship playing cycle will take place without him – Alexander's rating isn't high enough for him to get into the Candidates', and his performances in the Grand Prix and World Cup series were unsuccessful.

So what's preventing Grischuk from conquering the highest peaks? It's a difficult question. Possibly the absence of a coach is making itself felt, or a lack of diligence in his work at home between tournaments, or his widely-known affair with poker... Or perhaps he just hasn't had enough luck yet? Let's leave the champion of the country in the splendour of winning the title and move on to his only rival in this tournament, the silver prize-winner.

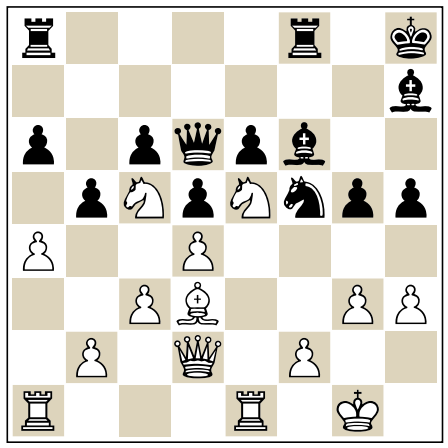
In the mid-nineties, when privatization was one of the buzzwords of the new Russia, when Fridman, Berezovsky, Khodarkovsky and other talented guys were dividing up everything of any kind of value that was left over from the USSR, in those years it may have seemed that the title of national chess champion had also become a victim of the 'loans-for-shares'. The young Petersburg genius Petya Svidler won virtually every national championship he played in.

In 2000 the situation changed, and it was only last year, at the end of the 'noughts', that Peter won the title of champion of the country for the fifth time. In those years he went from being a talented youth to a powerful 33-year-old grandmaster, one of the strongest in the world, whose only serious deficiency is that he's too good a person. He's too refined, too self-critical, too introspective. If he feels that he's been outplayed, he may resign in a position where there are still purely practical chances to save himself – just out of respect for his opponent and disgust with his own play. But if he wins, then what enables him to outplay his opponents is his deep knowledge, the speed and depth of his calculation, his understanding of the game – anything but crushing them by force of will. His authority in Russia is very high, especially among young players, and in team tournaments, in the absence of Kramnik, Peter not only holds onto Board 1, but is also the Russians' morale-builder.

Svidler immediately set the pace of the tournament, demonstrating that he didn't intend to relinquish the title. Three points in the first four rounds was a superb start, and only a misfire in the fifth round showed that the Petersburger wasn't in optimal form.

MARK GLUKHOVSKY

Debutant Sanan Sjugirov finished last, but he crushed Peter Svidler.



Sjugirov-Svidler
final position after 23.c3

In this position, after White's move 23.c3, Black... resigned.

Black's position looks terrible and it really is. This time Svidler probably resigned at the right moment. But still, he was playing the youngest participant in the tour-

nament, a newbie at the Super Final, who took last place in the end. Svidler lagged behind second place by half a point as a result.

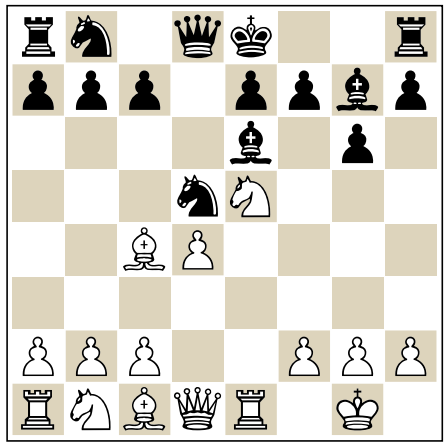
'Unfortunately I have to play this kind of terrible game in almost every tournament!' Peter remarked on the day after the rest day, when he had already completely recovered. In the last four rounds Svidler scored another three points, but it was already too late for him to escape from the role of runner-up. Coming second in such a strong tournament would be a wonderful result for anyone except him – a five-time Russian champion and one of the most talented grandmasters in the world.

The duet by soloists Grischuk and Svidler settled all the tournament intrigue. Third place was a big success for Petersburger Nikita Vitiugov, but he scored just plus 1, only in the last round getting onto the stage from the orchestra pit, where everyone else was playing. This isn't a disparaging metaphor, because 'everyone else' played strongly: there were lots of decisive games, brilliant combinations and subtle endings. Many a fully-fledged battle, which the journalistic format doesn't allow me to describe in detail. Fortunately Artyom Timofeev agreed to annotate what was the most delightful game, to my taste. The symphony of white pawns in this ending leaves an incredible impression.

NOTES BY
Alexander Grischuk

AL 10.5 – B04
Alexander Grischuk
Alexander Riazantsev
Moscow 2009 (5)

1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.d4 d6 4.♘f3
Earlier this year I played 4.c4 ♘b6 5.f4 against Svidler in the ACP Rapid World Cup, but didn't manage to remember the theory and lost without a fight.
The text-move is much more solid.
4...dxe5 5.♘xe5 g6 6.♗c4 ♗e6
6...♗g7 runs into 7.♘xf7; but 6...c6 is a serious alternative.
7.0-0 ♗g7 8.♖e1
It was a bit more precise to start with 8.♘d2 ♘d7 9.♘ef3, as after 9...c5 White keeps an advantage even with the primitive 10.dxc5 ♘xc5 11.♘b3.



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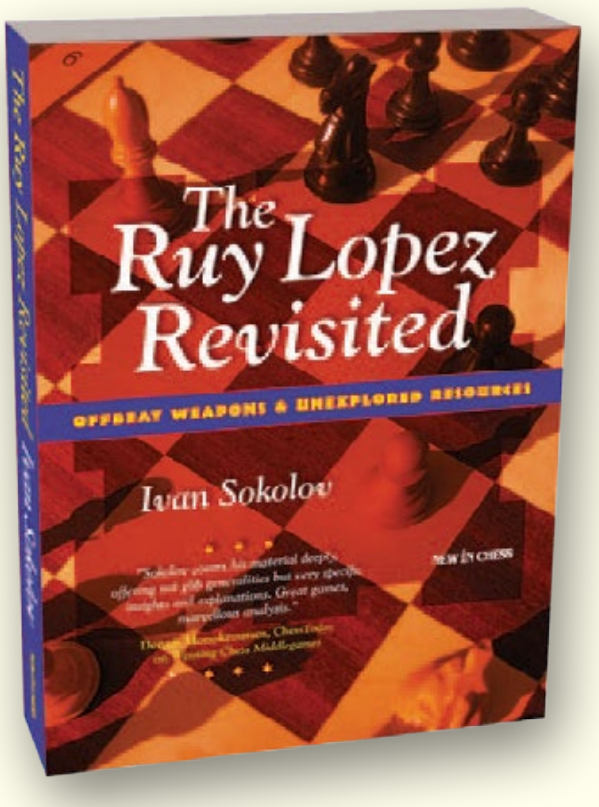

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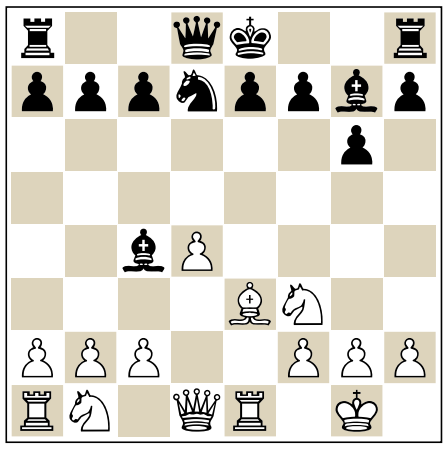
8...0-0

During the game I was afraid of 8...♘d7 – 9.♘d3 ♘e3 10.♗xe3 ♗xc4 11.♘a3 ♗xd3 12.♕xd3 0-0 is OK for Black.

But White is still better after 9.♘f3 ♘e3 10.♗xe3 ♗xc4, and now:

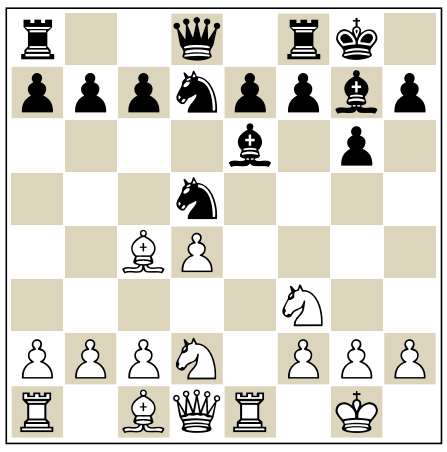


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 11.♘bd2 ♗a6 (11...♗e6 is excellent for White after 12.♘g5 ♗f5 13.g4) 12.♘e4 0-0 13.♕d2 b6 14.♗h6 ♗b7 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.c4 ♘f6 17.♘xf6 exf6 18.d5 ♕d6 19.♘d4, or

B) 11.b3 ♗d5 12.c4 ♗xf3 13.♕xf3 c6 14.♘c3 0-0 15.♖ad1 ♕a5 16.♗d2 ♖fe8 17.h3.

9.♘d2 ♘d7 10.♘ef3



10...♘7f6?

Alexander told me after the game that he had just forgotten about ♖xe6. He should have played 10...c6, although White is better after 11.c3 b5 12.♗b3.

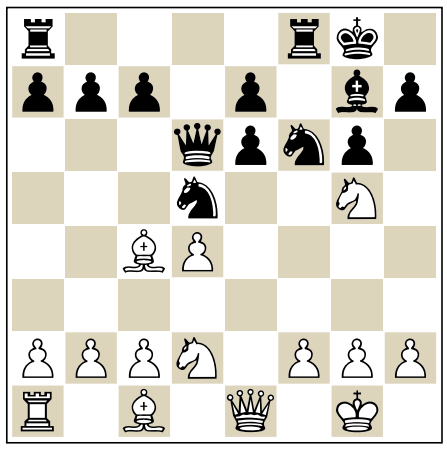
11.♖xe6

As Kasparov once said about a similar move (...♖c8xc3 in the Sicilian): 'It's not a sacrifice, it's a matter of chess culture!'

MARIA FOMINYKH

Alexander Grischuk: an exchange sacrifice as a matter of chess culture.

11...fxe6 12.♘g5 ♕d6 13.♕e1



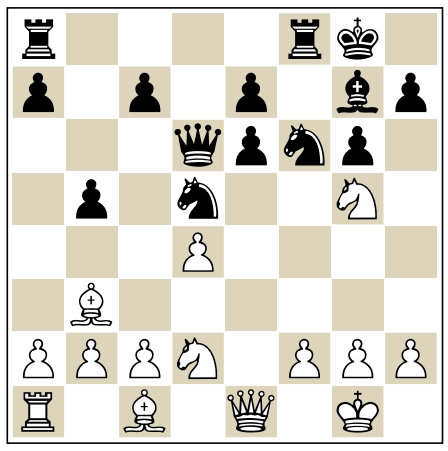
13...b5?

Also bad was: 13...♗h6 14.♘xe6 ♖f7 15.♘f3, or 13...♘g4 14.♕xe6+, or 13...h6 14.♘xe6 ♘g4 15.♘xf8 ♖xf8 16.♘f3 ♖xf3 17.gxf3 ♕xh2+ 18.♔f1, and White should be winning.

The only way to keep some chances was 13...♘f4 14.♘df3 (no better is 14.♘xe6 ♘xe6 15.♗xe6+ ♔h8 16.♘f3 ♘d7 17.c3 ♘e5 18.♘g5 ♘d3 19.♕e3 ♘xc1 20.♖xc1 ♗h6 21.♖e1 ♗xg5 22.♕xg5 ♕f4 23.♕xf4 ♖xf4 24.g3 ♖ff8, with a level position; and Black is even better after 14.♗xe6+ ♘xe6 15.♘xe6 ♘g4) 14...♘6d5 15.♗xf4 ♘xf4 16.♕e4 ♔h8 17.♖e1 ♕c6 18.♕xc6 bxc6, and Black is suffering, but the fight goes on.

14.♗b3

Unsurprisingly, the computer prefers 14.♗xb5!, after which 14...♘g4 doesn't work in view of 15.♕xe6+.



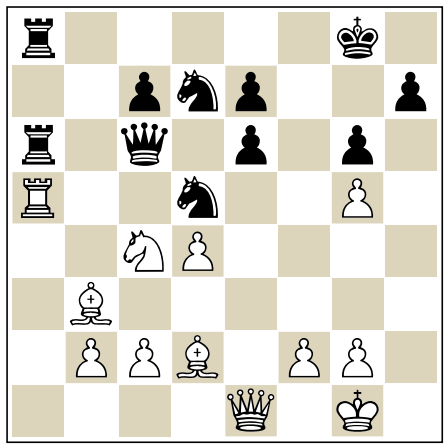
14...a5

More stubborn was 14...c6 15.♘df3 ♘c7 16.♗xe6+ ♘xe6 17.♘xe6 ♖fc8, but Black's position is gloomy in that case, too.

14...♘f4 is too late because after 15.g3 h6 16.♘ge4 ♘xe4 17.♘xe4 Black doesn't have ...♕c6, attacking the c4 bishop.

15.a4 Now White is winning.

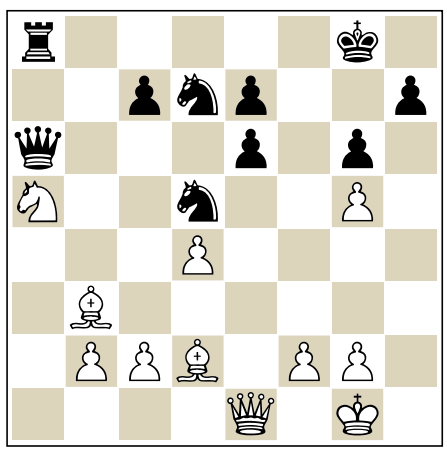
15...bxa4 16.♘c4 ♕c6 17.♖xa4 ♖a6 18.♖xa5 ♖fa8 19.♗d2 ♗h6 20.h4 ♗xg5 21.hxg5 ♘d7



22.♖xa6

22.♗a4! ♕xc4 23.♗xd7 ♖xa5 24.♗xe6+ ♔f8 25.♕e5 was easier, as my opponent indicated after the game.

22...♕xa6 23.♘a5



White has an interesting case of coordination between his pieces here: the weird-looking construction ♕e1, ♗d2, ♘a5, ♗b3 is, in fact, very solid and effective.

23...c5 24.♗a4! ♖a7 25.♗xd7 ♖xd7 26.dxc5 ♘c7 27.c4 ♕a8 28.c6 ♖d3 29.♗c3 ♕f8 30.♕e5 ♖d1+ 31.♔h2

Black resigned.

This looks like an easy victory, but I have to say that Riazantsev was in very bad form the first half of the tournament. After this game, going into the rest-day with only ½/5, he told me that he couldn't look at chess anymore. 'Hold on,' I replied, 'if you finish 4/4 you'll be back at 50%.' And that's almost what happened. After a 'warming up' draw against Tomashevsky Alexander indeed won his three last games!

NOTES BY

Peter Svidler

CK 4.10 – B12
Peter Svidler
Alexander Riazantsev
Moscow 2009 (3)

1.e4 c6

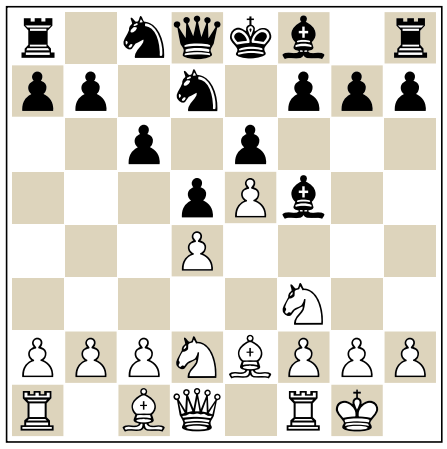
After episode 61 of the ongoing tragicomedy 'Svidler v the French' in Round 1, this choice rather surprised me. Why would anyone who can play French against me play anything else?

2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5 4.♘f3 e6 5.♗e2

I've been playing this position a lot recently, with both colours – and was about to play it some more a couple of days later. Suffice it to say, White tends to do well in my games.

5...♘d7 6.0-0 ♘e7 7.♘bd2 ♘c8

Not the line Alexander plays normally – but since he has worked with Karpov a lot recently, this move did not come as a complete shock.



8.a4!?

I've had this position in a blitz game against Anatoly Evgenyievich, and played 8.♘b3. This time I decided not to commit myself so early. My choice of a waiting move may seem strange at first, but I thought it might come in handy against the standard plans of developing the c8 knight: ...♘cb6 or ...a6 followed by ...♘a7.

8...♗e7

A very natural reply – but in view of what happened next, Black could consider playing 8...a5 here. It makes counterplay on the queenside a bit harder to organize – but the text-move allows for unpleasant expansion on the other flank.

9.♘e1!

The right hand does not seem to know what the left one is doing – but in fact, with the bishop on e7, Black can no longer meet this with 9...h5, since White will just take the pawn.

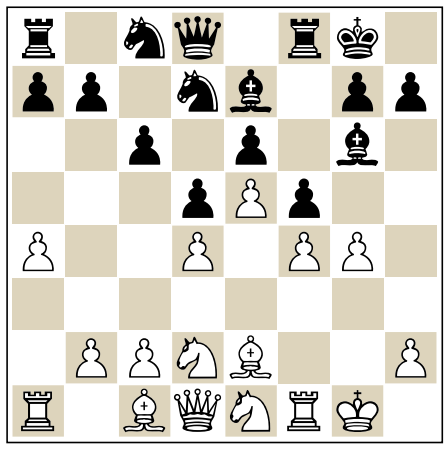
9...0-0

An additional illustration of the usefulness of the pawn on a4 is the following line: 9...f6 10.f4 ♕b6 11.c3 fxe5 12.fxe5 ♘xe5 13.a5!, and White wins.

Black could try 9...♗g6, with the idea of meeting 10.f4 by 10...h5, but after the possible 10.♘d3 the bishop will have to continue running – or get exchanged for the knight in rather unfavourable circumstances. Alternatively, White could play 10.g4!? h5 11.gxh5 and claim he has an extra pawn.

10.g4 ♗g6 11.f4 f5

11...f6? 12.f5 ♗f7 13.♘d3 would be very dangerous, to put it mildly – after 14.♘f3 and 15.♘f4 his centre is very likely to collapse completely.



12.h3?!

It seemed like such an obvious move at the time – Black does not look like creating any counterplay in the foreseeable future, so why not secure against any possibility of him taking on g4? In view of

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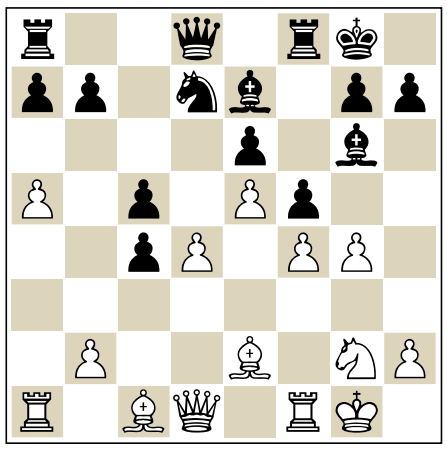
Peter Svidler: 'Why would anyone who can play French against me play anything else?'

what happened, this soon started looking like a wasted tempo. I believe I should have chosen 12.♘g2 instead, trying to put pressure on the f5 pawn straight away. Then Black would have a difficult choice – the direct counterplay seems to have backfired:

A) 12...♕b6 13.c3 c5 14.a5 ♕c6 15.gxf5 ♗xf5 16.♘e3, and it's hard to find a piece Black hasn't misplaced;

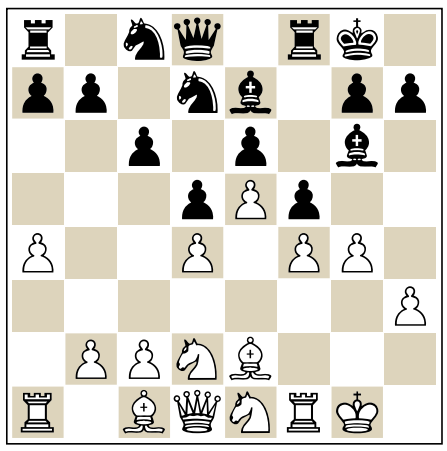
B) 12...c5 13.c4 ♘cb6 14.a5 ♘xc4 15.♘xc4 dxc4



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

16.d5! ♘xe5 17.fxe5 exd5 18.♘f4, and Black is lost. Therefore, he would probably be forced to play:

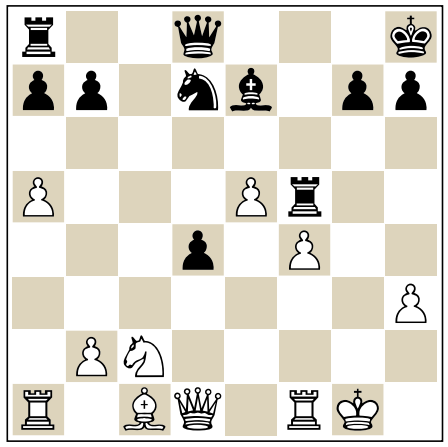
C) 12...fxg4 13.♗xg4 ♗f5 14.♘e3 (or even 14.♗xf5 exf5 15.♘e3, planning ♕f3 and c4) 14...g6 15.♘xf5 gxf5 16.♗h5, which is not really a bundle of laughs.



12...a5

Since White wasted a whole move on 12.h3, it makes sense for Black to prepare ...c5 properly, even if it was possible to try it right away:

12...c5 13.c4 ♘cb6 14.a5 ♘xc4 15.♘xc4 dxc4 16.♗xc4 (16.d5 is much less clear now, since after 16...♘xe5! 17.fxe5 exd5 White cannot attack the d5 pawn with his knight) 16...cxd4 17.♗xe6+ ♔h8, and the position is completely unclear: Alexander was worried about 18.gxf5 ♗xf5 19.♗xf5 ♖xf5 20.♘c2, but Black can play



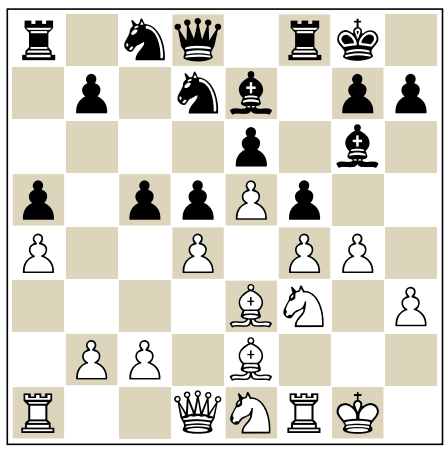
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

20...♘xe5! here, and after 21.fxe5 ♖xf1+ 22.♔xf1 ♕d5 23.♔g1 ♖f8 the group in striped swimming suits lounging on the queenside are not a great help against Black's attack on the other half of the board.

13.♘df3

13.♘g2 c5 seemed too slow for me now, and I opted to complete development and postpone the decision on what to do with the knight on e1. This, however, marks the end of great ambitions for White – if he cannot get to f5 before Black mounts his counter-offensive in the centre, the game becomes a much more long-term strategic affair.

13...c5 14.♗e3

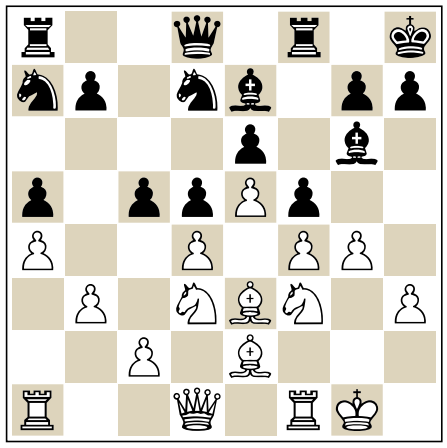


14...♔h8
A mysterious move which my opponent was quite happy with, even though he could not explain what exactly it defended against. I would have preferred the immediate 14...♘a7, and Black is more than ready to meet 15.c4 with 15...♘b6.

15.b3
I could have played 15.dxc5 here, but after 15...♗xc5 16.♘d4 ♘e7 Black's coordination is improved drastically, which negates the beautiful knight on d4. Instead, I continued making small improvements, awaiting the inevitable clash in the centre.

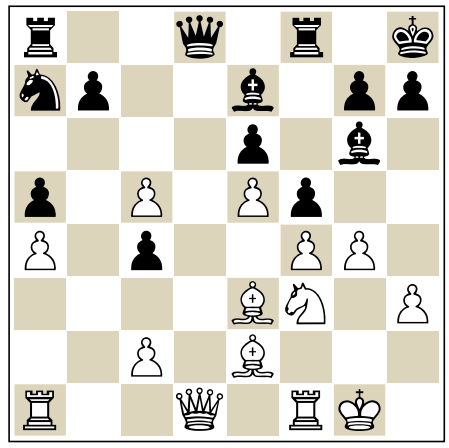
15...♘a7
Black is almost there – if I allow ...♘c6 and ...♖c8, it will be hard to explain why White should be better at all.

16.♘d3
This move caused Black no objective problems – but the only real alternative, 16.c4, does not promise much either: 16...fxg4! 17.hxg4 ♗e4, and Black has great counterplay as is obvious from lines like 18.♖c1 ♖c8 19.cxd5 ♗xd5 20.♗c4 ♘b6, and Black is doing quite well.



16...c4! A very concrete approach. There was nothing particularly wrong with 16...♖c8 either: 17.g5!? ♗h5 18.c4 ♗xf3 19.♗xf3 cxd4 20.♗xd4 ♘c6 21.♗f2 dxc4 22.bxc4 ♕c7, and the position is quite unclear. But the text-move is even more forcing.

17.bxc4 17.♘f2 cxb3 18.cxb3 ♘c6 is clearly uninspiring.
17...dxc4 18.♘c5 18.♘b2 c3 19.♘c4 ♘c6 20.g5 ♘b4 leads to a very sharp double-edged position.
18...♘xc5 19.dxc5



19...♕c8!
I had missed this move, having considered only 19...♕c7, to which I was planning to reply with 20.♗xc4 fxg4 (20...♗xc5 21.♗xc5 ♕xc5+ 22.♕d4 ♕c8 23.♗b3 fxg4 24.hxg4 ♗xc2 25.♗a2!, and White's compensation is immense)

Kaissiber on Emanuel Lasker

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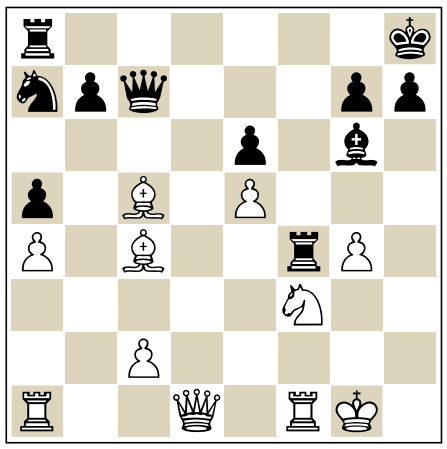
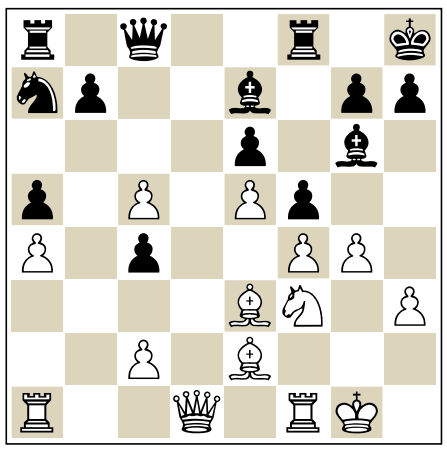
21.hxg4 ♗xc5 22.♗xc5 ♖xf4



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

23.♕d6! ♖xg4+ 24.♔h2 (the reason 24.♔h1 is weaker is not immediately obvious, but the fact that after 24...♕xd6 25.exd6 ♖xc4 26.♗xa7 ♖xa7 27.♘e5 ♖h4+! White does not have 28.♔g3 turns out to be more important than allowing Black to take on c2 with check: 28.♔g2 ♖a8, and White will have enough for a draw, but not more) 24...♕xd6 25.exd6 ♖xc4 26.♗xa7 ♖xa7 27.♘e5 ♖xc2+ 28.♔g3 ♖c3+ 29.♖f3 ♖xf3+ 30.♔xf3 ♗e8 31.♖c1 ♖a8 32.d7, and while a draw is the most likely result with only one White pawn left, he still has some hopes left.

19...♕c8 got me out of kilter though, and my next decision is far from ideal.



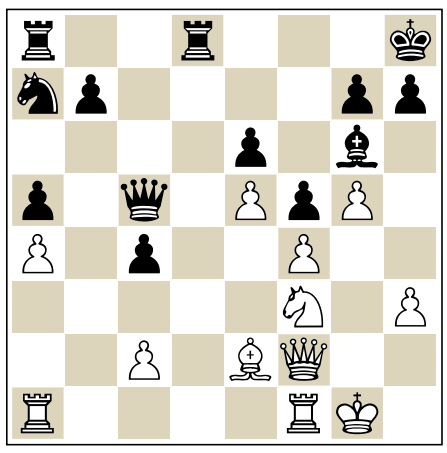
20.g5?!

I correctly surmised that 20.♗xc4 is no longer a good option: 20...fxg4 21.hxg4 ♗xc5 22.♗xc5 ♖xf4 23.♗xa7 (there is no ♕d6 now...) 23...♖xg4+ 24.♔h2 ♖xc4 25.♗e3 ♗xc2, and Black is doing quite well.

But it was much better to play 20.♕d4 fxg4 21.hxg4 ♘c6 22.♕xc4 ♘b4 23.♗f2! (the move I completely failed to spot), and White retains some semblance of control.

20...♖d8 21.♕e1 ♗xc5 22.♗xc5 ♕xc5+ 23.♕f2

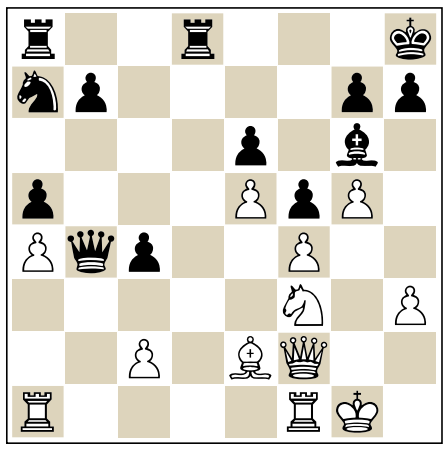
I was very proud of this idea during the game – for the price of a pawn, White walled in the bishop on g6, and is now planning to take full advantage of his much more active pieces. However, with precise play Black could get a very comfortable game here.



23...♕xf2+?

A decision influenced by the impending time-trouble. We both considered 23...♕c7 to be very risky: 24.♘d4! (even stronger than my planned 24.♖fd1 ♖xd1+ 25.♖xd1 ♗e8 26.♘d4 ♗d7, and Black has consolidated) 24...♗f7 25.♗f3, and White has tremendous play for a meagre pawn.

However, the somewhat counter-intuitive 23...♕b4! was very strong here:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

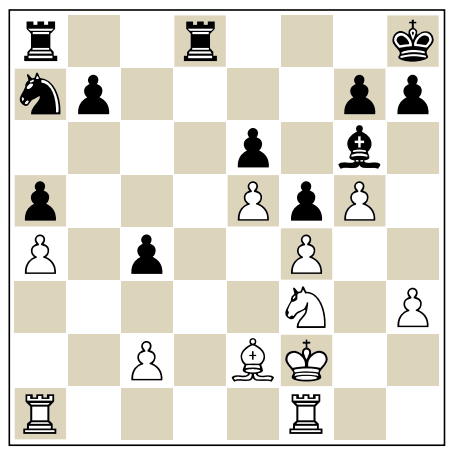
A) 24.♖ab1 ♕xa4 25.♖xb7 ♕xc2! 26.♘d4 ♕e4 27.♖xa7 ♖xa7 28.♘xe6 ♖da8 29.♗f3 ♕d3 is excellent for Black;

B) 24.♖fb1 ♕c3 is even less convincing;

C) 24.♕e3 c3 25.♖fb1 ♕e4 26.♔f2 ♘c6 27.♖xb7 ♘b4 is also bad;

D) I would have to settle on 24.c3, exchanging the weak c4 pawn instead of winning it back: 24...♕xc3 25.♖fc1 ♕b4 26.♗xc4 ♕e7 27.♘d4 ♗f7 28.♖ab1, and White could have enough for equality, but certainly no more.

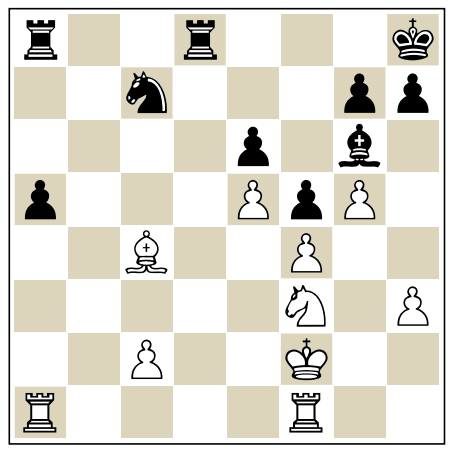
24.♔xf2



24...b5!

Returning the pawn straight away, but freeing some of the pieces and creating an outside passer.

25.axb5 ♘xb5 26.♗xc4 ♘c7



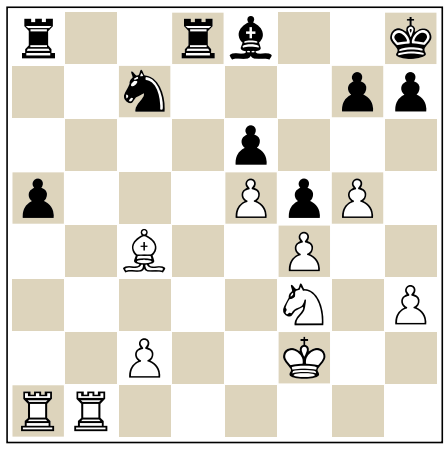
27.♖fb1?

My first instinct was to play 27.♖fd1! here, but I convinced myself that the a-pawn is too dangerous when a set of rooks comes off. In fact, it was clearly preferable to the text: 27...♖xd1 28.♖xd1 ♘d5 (both 28...♗e8 and 28...a4

are very well met by 29.♘d4) 29.♘d4!? ♘xf4 30.♘xe6 ♘xe6 31.♗xe6 a4 32.♖d6 ♗e8 33.♗d5 ♖c8 34.c4, and White is dominating.

27...♗e8

Now the game begins anew.



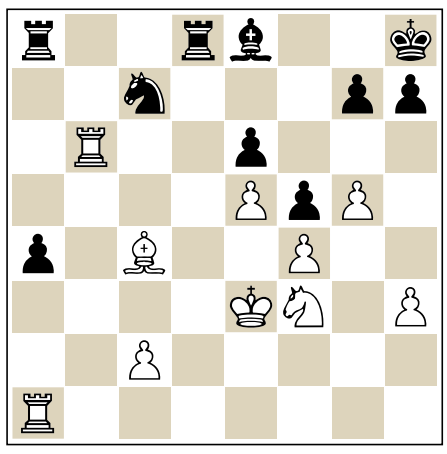
28.♖b6

Missing another good opportunity: 28.♖b7!? ♘d5 29.♗xd5 ♖xd5 30.♔e3, and once again Black is reminded of the ill-advised 14...♔h8: 30...♖c8 31.♖a3!, and since 31...♖xc2 loses to 32.♖b8, White will be in time to consolidate with 33.♘d4.

28...a4 29.♔e3

This wasn't an easy decision – the thought of a black knight landing on d5 at some point is a scary one – but I felt that without the king joining the fray I wouldn't have much hope for an advantage.

29.♖d6 was a worthy alternative – White needs to take control of the d4-square – but I was reluctant to abandon the b-file.



29...♖db8

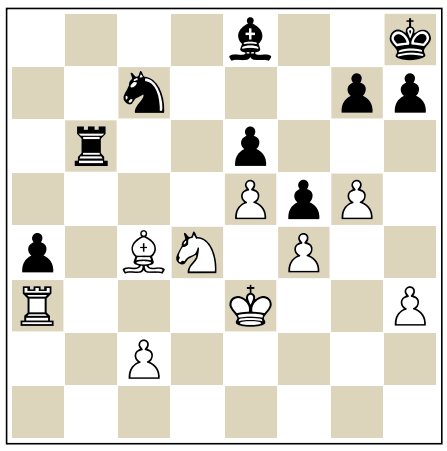
I am sure Alexander was tempted by 29...a3, but the counterplay never really gets going after the precise 30.♘d4! ♖a4 31.♖d6! ♖xd6 32.exd6 ♖xc4 33.♔d3 ♖c5 34.dxc7 ♖xc7 35.♖xa3. The text-move is far more tenacious.

30.♖xb8

Played in the same spirit as 29.♔e3 – I could not shake off the feeling that leaving the b-file for the black rook would be far too risky. I also felt that if I wanted to put the rook on d6, I should have done it one move earlier, and doing it now would be inconsistent at the very least.

30...♖xb8 31.♘d4 ♖b6 32.♖a3

White retains some pressure, but the reduced material means Black has real hopes of survival. However, his next decision dashes those.



32...h6?

He had to play 32...g6, and after the best 33.♗a2! (33.♖c3 ♗d7! 34.♗a2 ♘a6 leads White nowhere) 33...♗d7 34.♖d3! ♖b2 35.♖c3 ♖b7 36.♖c5 ♖a7 37.c4 White's space advantage is telling, but if Black succeeds in getting the king closer to the action he will have reasonable drawing chances.

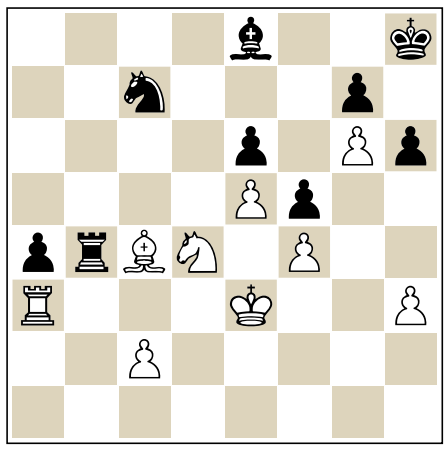
33.g6!

Now the king is badly cut off, and it will be extremely hard to bring it out of the corner without losing material, since ...♔g8 will always run into ♘xf5.

33...♖b4

Black should have bitten the bullet and played 33...♘d5+ 34.♗xd5 exd5 35.♘xf5 ♗xg6 36.♘d4 ♗e8 37.f5 ♔g8 38.♖c3, and although White is better, Black has managed to exchange some more material and to bring the king closer to where it needs to be.

The text-move looks tempting – and Alexander senses correctly that I played 33.g6 fast without checking it properly to create additional pressure in his serious time-trouble – but luckily for me, a very strong reply ensures no respite for Black.

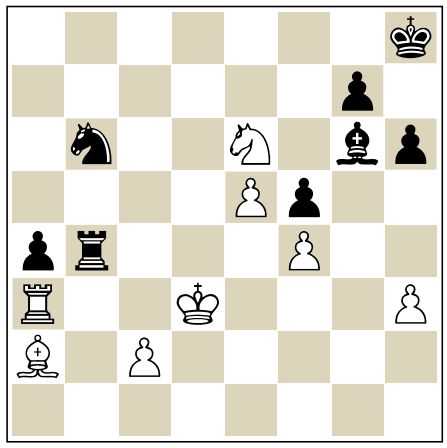


34.♔d3! ♘d5

Agony, but neither 34...♗d7 35.♖c3 ♖b6 36.♗a2 ♖b7 37.♖c5 ♖a7 38.♔d2 nor 34...♗xg6 35.♔c3 ♖b1 36.♖xa4 promised any real improvement.

35.♘xe6 ♘b6 36.♗a2 ♗xg6

For a second it might seem that Black has weathered the storm – but in fact he is completely lost.



37.c4! Black is helpless against the threat of 38.♔c3.

37...♗f7 37...♖b2 38.c5 ♘d7 39.♖xa4 ♗f7 40.♖a8+ ♔h7 41.♘f8+ ♘xf8 42.♗xf7 is also utterly hopeless. **38.♔c3 ♖xc4+ 39.♗xc4 ♘xc4 40.♔xc4 ♗xe6+ 41.♔c5**

The e-pawn will be unstoppable, and Black resigned.

NOTES BY

Artyom Timofeev

SI 1.9 – B52
Artyom Timofeev
Denis Khismatullin
Moscow 2009 (5)

This game was played in the fifth round of the Super Final. In the previous round I had lost, and therefore in this game I wanted to fight.

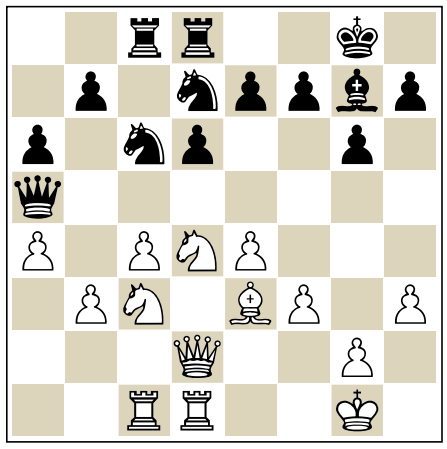
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♗b5+

A rare move in my games. I decided to surprise my opponent.

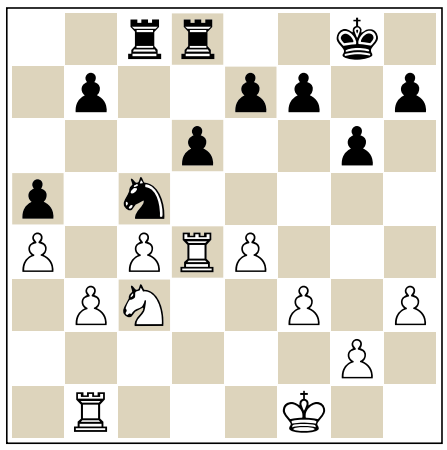
3...♗d7

The main moves in Denis's repertoire are 3...♘d7 and 3...♘c6. Apparently fearing a prepared line, he chose the third continuation, in which he showed a good understanding. After logical play, already by the 20th move an endgame was reached.

4.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 5.c4 ♘c6 6.♘c3 g6 7.d4 cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♘f6 9.f3 ♗g7 10.♗e3 0-0 11.0-0 ♖ac8 12.b3 a6 13.a4 ♕d8 14.♕d2 ♕a5 15.♖fd1 ♖fd8 16.♖ac1 ♘d7 17.h3



17...♘xd4 18.♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 19.♕xd4 ♕c5 20.♔f1 ♕xd4 21.♖xd4 ♘c5 22.♖b1 a5



MARIA FOMINYKH

Artyom Timofeev created one of the most beautiful pawn phalanxes in modern chess history to beat Denis Khismatullin.

For a start I decided to bring my king to the defence of the b3 pawn. After this the two rooks will be active and some action can be undertaken.

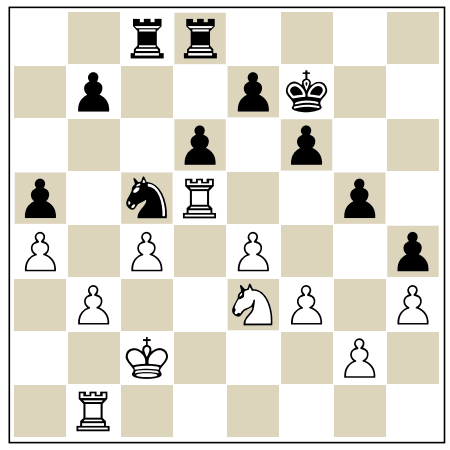
23.♔e2 f6 24.♔d2 ♔f7 25.♔c2 g5

Black, in turn, seizes space where he can.

26.♘d5

Initially I wanted to set up counterplay on the kingside, but after delving into the position I was unable to select a move order that would prevent the further advance of the black pawns, for example 26.♖h1 ♖g8 27.♘d5 h5 28.h4 g4, and therefore I decided to delay slightly any positive action by making the move in the game.

26...h5 27.♘e3 h4 28.♖d5

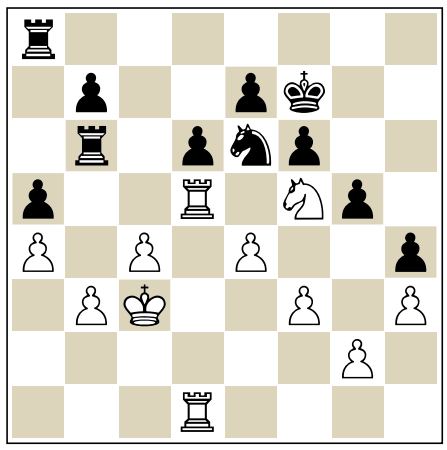


Now the only possibility of initiating any play is by advancing f3-f4, which is hard to carry out, although it is something that can be contemplated.

28...♖c6

There now follow some one-move attacks by both sides, which cannot be deemed the strongest in the position, in view of the large number of good alternatives. Black still has to consolidate, but Denis does not create any weaknesses and decides to stand firm.

29.♖bd1 ♖dc8 30.♖f1 ♖b6 31.♖b1 ♖bc6 32.♖d2 ♘e6 33.♔c3 ♘c5 34.♘d5 ♘e6 35.♖f1 ♖g8 36.♘e3 ♖b8 37.♘f5 ♖b6 38.♖fd1 ♖a8 39.♖d5



39...♘c7

If 39...♘c5 I was already intending to sacrifice the exchange, with quite reasonable compensation for the material: 40.♖xc5 dxc5 41.♖d7 ♖e8 42.♖c7.

40.♖b5

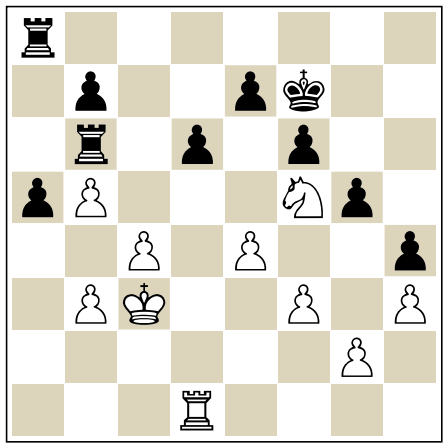
In making this move, I assumed that I was not taking any great risk. If the sacrifice is accepted, I obtain compensation, while in the event of the exchange of rooks the position is still equal, only with a different pattern.

40...♘xb5+

40...♖xb5 41.axb5 ♘e6 42.♖a1 ♘f4 43.♖a2 b6 was simpler, after which the game would in no way have been distinguished from a million others.

41.axb5

I wanted to shut in the rook with a large number of pawns. I did not even bother to calculate the other capture, although here White has at least an equal position: 41.cxb5 d5 42.♖xd5 ♖c8+ 43.♔b2 ♖e6 44.♖d7 b6, and the black pieces are tied to the defence, but for White too it is not easy to strengthen his position.



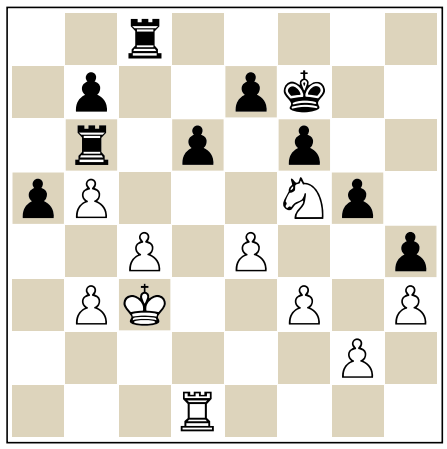
41...♔e8

The attempt to break out does not succeed. This was the continuation that I calculated first of all. The king b4 + knight d4 combination was found during the game. 41...a4 42.♖a1:

A) 42...e6 43.♘d4! (now White is playing not for compensation, but to win the rook!) 43...a3 44.♔b4 f5 (44...a2 45.♘e2! heading towards the rook; 45...e5 – the only move – 46.♘c3 d5 47.exd5 ♖d6 48.c5 ♖dd8 49.c6, winning) 45.♖xa3 (45.c5 e5) 45...♖xa3 46.♔xa3 fxe4 47.fxe4 e5 48.♘c2 d5 49.exd5 ♖f6 50.c5, with a clear advantage;

B) 42...a3 43.♔b4 a2 44.♘e3 d5 45.exd5 ♖d6 46.c5 ♖dd8 47.c6, and White is clearly better.

The strongest was 41...♖c8

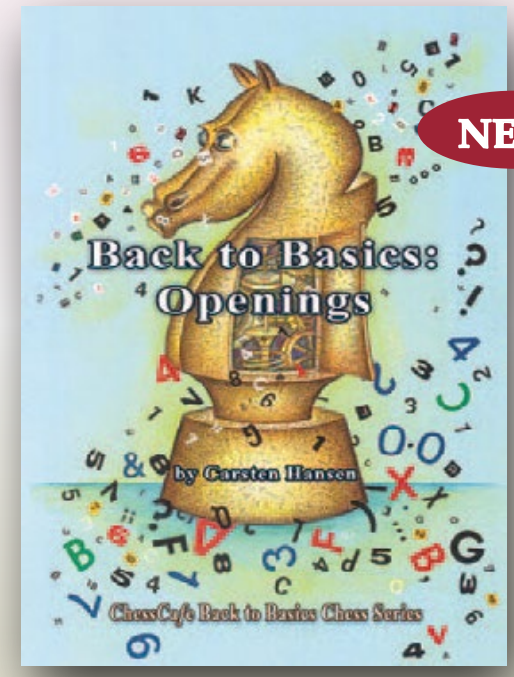


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

42.♔b2! (if the king goes to the centre, then, in contrast to the game, the a5 pawn is not attacked and Black is able to free himself: 42.♔d4 e6 43.♘e3 d5 44.exd5 exd5 45.♘xd5 ♖e6) 42...♔f8, and with a cunning move order Black maintains the balance.

And here is an illustration of direct play by Black and the problems awaiting him in that case: 41...♖d8 42.♖a1 e6 43.♘d4 d5 44.exd5 exd5 45.c5 ♖c8 46.b4 ♖d6 47.♔d3 ♖dd8 48.♖xa5.

42.♖a1



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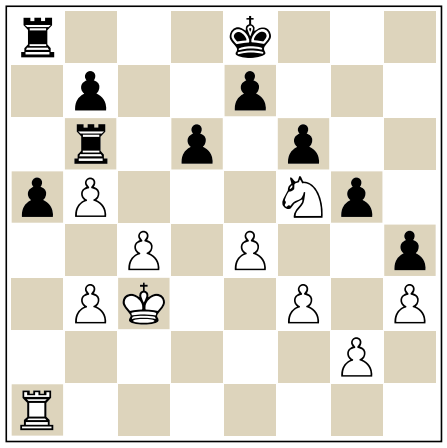
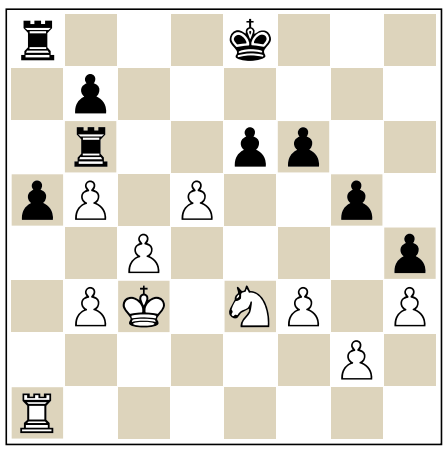
Initially I thought that by placing my knight on d4 I would shut in the rook, but the possibility of the rook move to c8 frustrates this plan: 42.♔d3 e6 43.♘d4 ♔d7 44.♖a1 ♖c8 and d6-d5.



42...e6 43.♘e3 If 43.♘d4 ♔d7 and ...♖c8. **43...d5** Sooner or later this will have to be played.

44.exd5

The machine suggests centralizing the king, but when you are the exchange down you want to regain as many pawns as possible: 44.♔d4!? ♖d8 45.exd5 exd5 46.♘xd5 ♖e6 47.♖xa5 ♖e2, with counterplay, although it seems to me that White's passed pawns will be more dangerous.



44...♖d6?

The decisive mistake! Black should have been a little more patient, but the desire to activate the wretched rook is understandable. The intrigue would have been retained by 44...♔f7 45.♖a4 exd5 46.♘xd5 ♖d6 47.♔d4 ♖e8. And, as already in many variations which had to be worked through, incredible races begin.

Moscow 2009 — **cat. XVIII**

				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		TPR
1	Alexander Grischuk	IGM	2736	*	½	½	½	1	½	1	1	½	1	6½	2852
2	Peter Svidler	IGM	2754	½	*	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	0	6	2809
3	Nikita Vitiugov	IGM	2694	½	½	*	½	1	1	0	½	1	0	5	2733
4	Evgeny Alekseev	IGM	2715	½	½	½	*	0	½	1	½	½	½	4½	2688
5	Dmitry Yakovenko	IGM	2736	0	½	0	1	*	½	½	½	½	1	4½	2686
6	Denis Khismatullin	IGM	2643	½	0	0	½	½	*	1	½	0	1	4	2653
7	Alexander Riazantsev	IGM	2661	0	0	1	0	½	0	*	½	1	1	4	2651
8	Evgeny Tomashevsky	IGM	2708	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	1	4	2646
9	Artyom Timofeev	IGM	2651	½	0	0	½	½	1	0	½	*	½	3½	2615
10	Sanan Sjugirov	IGM	2612	0	1	1	½	0	0	0	0	½	*	3	2574

45.c5

Now the avalanche begins to move...

45...♖dd8

Or 45...♖c8 46.♔d4 e5+ 47.♔c4 b6 48.c6, and wins.

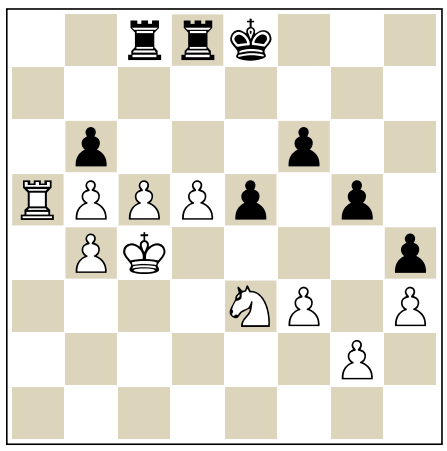
46.♔d4 ♖ac8

One future heroine should have been removed from the board, by employing physical force: 46...exd5 47.♘xd5 ♔f7 48.♔c4, although White remains better.

47.♖xa5 e5+

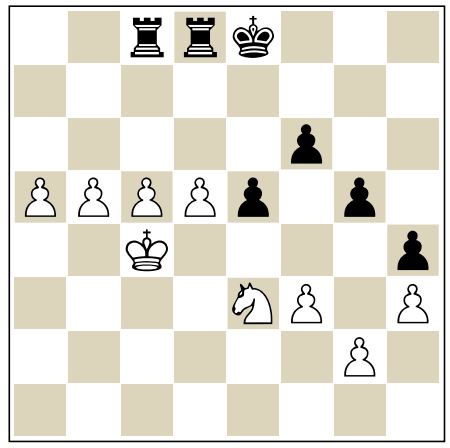
If 47...b6 48.cxb6 and the pawns advance not horizontally as in the game, but vertically. After the over-optimistic 48.b4 bxa5 49.bxa5 exd5 I have not been able to find even a draw for White. One rook sacrifices itself, and then the broken pawns are lost.

48.♔c4 b6 49.b4



Spectacular and effective! I will not attach any exclamation marks, because there is a dual solution. 49.c6 is also good enough for victory, but not for aesthetic perception.

49...bxa5 50.bxa5



Paraphrasing a well-known slogan, one could say: one for all and all for one! Now the main thing for White is that his pawn chain should not come apart.

50...♖a8 51.a6

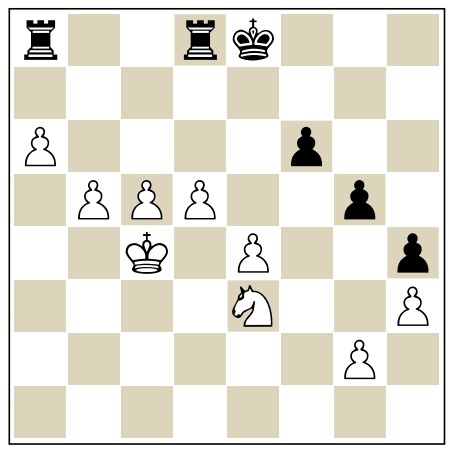
The king could have run behind the barricades, but I was afraid of the move f6-f5. But White wins after 51.♔b4 f5 52.b6 f4 53.♘g4 ♔e7 54.d6+ ♔e6 55.♔b5.

51...e4

Otherwise c5-c6, the knight goes to f5, and everything advances.

52.fxe4

Now there are five!



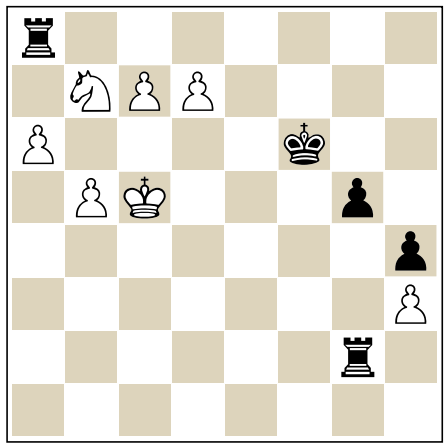
52...♔d7 53.♘f5

Various continuations (e.g. 53. c6+) would have won, but I chose the safest one. The rest is clear without any commentary. The pawns promote!

53...♖e8 54.c6+ ♔d8 55.♘d6 ♖e7 56.♔c5 f5 57.exf5 ♖e2 58.♘b7+

White wins prettily after 58.b6 ♖c2+ 59.♘c4 ♖xa6 60.b7 ♔c7 61.d6+ ♔b8 62.d7, but I stuck to the chosen course.

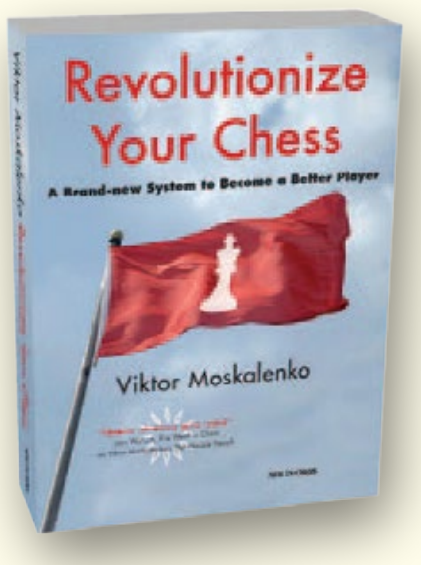
58...♔e8 59.d6 ♖xg2 60.d7+ ♔e7 61.f6+ ♔xf6 62.c7



Black resigned. The pawns promote simultaneously, but I will be a piece and a pawn up. There could have followed 62...♖c2+ 63.♔b6 ♖xc7 64.♔xc7 g4 65. d8♕+ ♖xd8 66.♘xd8 g3 67.a7 g2 68.a8♕ g1♕ 69.♕f3+.

So, the women's Super-Final was held alongside the men's this year. In Russia there are lots of beautiful girls who play chess well. Women's world champion Alexandra Kosteniuk didn't play this year, and in her absence the top seeds were, as usual, the charming Kosintseva sisters from Arkhangelsk. Apart from the big one they've already won all the other titles more than once: for example, they've been women's champions of Russia and Europe, in the individual and the team categories. Out of the other potential winners we should also mention the sweet girl from Murmansk Valentina Gunina, who can't yet provide serious competition for the sisters, but she's getting stronger every year and is already on the team. There's also Natalia Pogonina – who recently got married and gave birth to a son – who's reached the elite level for women of 2500. But still, the main event in the women's tournament was the triumphant return of Alisa Galliamova.

The ex-wife of Vasily Ivanchuk, Alisa Galliamova was twice runner-up to the women's world champion, and that says it all. For the past couple of years, in which she's remarried and had a second child, she hasn't played chess, but now she's decided 'to remember how the pieces move'. Always smiling, having missed high-level play, she won this tournament without visible effort, starting with five wins, in the end giving up only three half-points to direct



"Most chess players fail to make real progress once they have reached a certain level. They focus on studying openings, classical middlegame tactics, the odd strategic theme and a few rules-of-thumb for the endgame. But when they sit down at the board and face real chess problems they are often clueless. Why is this?"

Viktor Moskalenko

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MARK GLUKHOVSKY

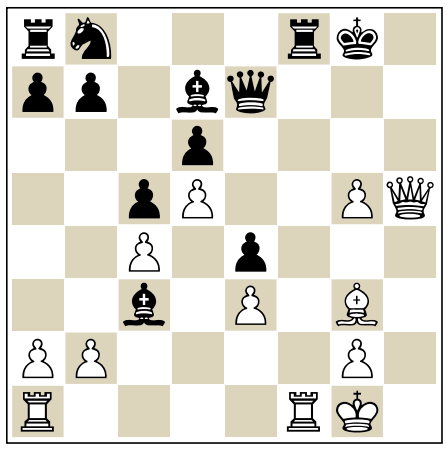
Valentina Gunina: 'The sunniest smile I know and an extraordinarily aggressive style – there you have natural reasons for fans to pay close attention to her play.'

rivals: two draws with the Kosintsevas and one, an agreed result, in the last round with Gunina.

Despite her six wins it's difficult to find an appropriate diagram from her games, because she didn't outplay her opponents in tactical skirmishes, but simply because of a significantly higher class of play. If Alisa decides to return to high-level chess, this will be good news for fans and a cause of migraines for her rivals. Despite a solid amount of time on playing probation, she's completely capable of fighting for the top titles.

Nadezhda Kosintseva, who also displayed a wonderful result, scoring plus 5, found herself in the role of Svidler: she played excellently, but she lost the title. However, she didn't look disappointed – the European Championship was still ahead, then the World Championship. There'll be a chance for her to prove herself.

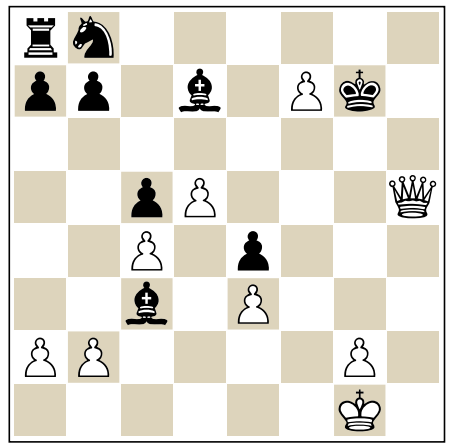
Valya Gunina's third place wasn't a sensation at all. The sunniest smile I know and an extraordinarily aggressive style – there you have natural reasons for fans to pay close attention to her play. Finally I'll bring in the best example, to my taste, of her work at the championship.



Gunina-Bodnaruk
position after 24...♗xc3

White is already short on pieces, but when Valentina sees a continuation of an attack, it's impossible to stop her. As she explained after the game, the first sacrifice was more intuitive, but in the position in the diagram the solution found itself:

25.♗xd6! ♕xd6 26.g6 ♖xf1+ 27.♖xf1 ♕e7 28.♖f7 ♕xf7 29.gxf7+ ♔g7



30.♕h8+!

An elegant conclusion to a beautiful attack. Black is completely helpless.

30...♔xf7 31.bxc3 ♔e7 32.g4 ♗e8 33.♕e5+ ♔d7 34.♕g7+ ♔c8 35.♕e7 ♗d7 36.g5 a5 37.♕xc5+ ♔d8 38.♕f8+ ♔c7 39.c5 ♖a6 40.d6+ ♔c6 41.♕xb8 ♔xc5 42.♕c7+

Black resigned.

'Yeeees,' Grischuk drawled after watching the game, 'we don't know how to do that kind of thing!'

There was no more irony in the grandmaster's voice than usual, but none of the serious gentlemen who had crowded around the monitor – neither Svidler, nor Yakovenko, nor Vitiugov – even tried to contradict him...

We won't do that either. Holding the men's and women's championships simultaneously is a great joy that concludes each chess year in Russia. Alekhine was insightful, but Tarrasch was truly wise when he said that chess, like music and love, can make people happy.

Alexander Alekhine

The Paris years

Winning the World Championship from Capablanca made him the toast of the town among Russian émigrés in Paris, but Alexander Alekhine always longed to be received triumphantly in his motherland. His political compromises had disastrous results. He was rejected by the Soviet government and denounced by the compatriots who had once held banquets in his honour. Alekhine believed he had a colossal intellect, but his decisions in life didn't mirror the brilliance he showed at the chessboard.

Genna Sosonko

'Friday morning – summer breakfast in Alekhine's honour. Afternoon – gala lunch in Alekhine's honour. Evening – hot and cold dinner in Alekhine's honour.' Thus wrote the Russian wit Don-Aminado when the new world chess champion returned to Paris in January 1928 after his victory over Capablanca.

There were many famous writers, artists, composers and ballet-masters among the Russian emigration. But even with all those celebrities there were shining stars of the first order of magnitude: Sergey Diaghilev, Marc Chagall, Sergey Rachmaninov, Igor Stravinsky, Ivan Bunin, Feodor Chaliapin, Serge Lifar. Now another one had started to twinkle – Alexander Alekhine.

The whole of Russian Paris rejoiced. For a while all feuds and arguments were forgotten, and even irreconcilable enemies congratulated each other: who'd have thought it! – their compatriot had become the strongest chess player in the world.

In an essay devoted to the new champion, author Alexander Kuprin wrote: 'And what a great thing it is to be a king, reigning neither through the rules of succession nor through the luck of a plebiscite, but thanks to the sharpness of one's own mind.'

Reception followed reception, and one laudatory article appeared after another. 'Now the world chess champion is a Russian. This overcast morning has been brightened for us by your victory. Hurrah!' – writer Boris Zaytsev exclaimed with pride.

Political thinker Peter Struve echoed him: 'In the modern spiritual condition of Russians both inside Russia and abroad the most undoubtedly genuine and strongest feature is the ascent and intensification of a national sense of our Russianness, zeal for the motherland and pride in her successes and victories.'

Tribute was paid to the new world champion on February 4 in the editorial offices of *Russia Illustrated*. Virtually the entire world of the Russian emigration gathered there. Chess players also came, of course: Osip Bernstein and Eugene Znosko-Borovsky. Glass-

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(Фотографія снята 25-го февраля 1928 г. — подробности см. стр. 5).

'Chess King' Alexander Alekhine on the cover of 'Russia Illustrated', in the company of émigré politicians P.N. Milyukov and P.B. Struve.

es were raised. Toasts and speeches were made. Bravo Alekhine!

On February 12 the French Chess Federation also hosted a banquet in the hall of the Hotel Lutetia in honour of the new world champion – for all that, Monsieur Alekhine was a French National. When the match with Capablanca was coming to an end, Alekhine received a notification from across the ocean about his attainment of French citizenship. Although Alexander Alexandrovich remarked on this matter with a smile that 'the match for the World Championship between a Cuban and a Russian has finished with a victory for the Frenchman', obtaining citizenship was extraordinarily important for him. Almost all the Russian emigration lived on the unstable Nansen passports, constantly afraid that they wouldn't be extended. A trip to another country and the associated compulsory acquisition of a visa turned into a not-so-pleasant and almost always protracted process. This was particularly important for Alekhine, who travelled all over the world.

In reply to the congratulations, the world champion began his speech with a categorical protest against the assertions attributed to him in the press that he considered winning the title to be the fulfilment of his lifelong dream. 'Thank God,' Alekhine declared, 'my life's dream is far from the limitations of the 64 squares on the chessboard.'

None of the journalists thought of asking the world champion what this real dream was, but I don't think that it would have been easy for Alekhine to give a sincere answer, although was there really one? The dream, purpose and meaning of his life were precisely to win the title, and moreover in an article published immediately after the match, Alekhine wrote: 'Finally my life's dream has come true, and I have managed to reap the fruits of my long efforts and labours.'

On February 15 a reception in Alekhine's honour took place at the Russian Club. There was no shortage of celebrity here, either. Fifteen orators took the stage; their speeches in honour of the instigator of the festivities were punctuated by lengthy applause. Remembering the past and drinking to the future, the audience greeted every speech with a stormy applause and triple kissing of the world's number one chess player.

A week later a film was made, the showing of which was due to coincide with a big writers' ball in the hall of the Lutetia. Bunin and Zaytsev, poet Vladislav Khodasevich and his wife writer Nina Berberova, novelist Mark Aldanov and philosopher Lev Shestov could be seen in the film. Struve and politician Pavel Milyukov, forgetting their party differences, played a game, the arbiter of which was the world champion himself.

Alekhine was always accompanied at all the festivities by Nadezhda Semenovna Vasilieva, neé Fabritskaya. She was the world champion's third wife. Alekhine met Nadezhda Semenovna, or Nadine, as everyone called her, in 1924 at one of the Russian balls that were given at the time in Paris on the most varied pretexts. Fabritskaya was the widow of a general, had a grown-up daughter, Gwendolin, and, like all of Alekhine's wives, was considerably older than her husband. Born into a very wealthy family, Nadine spoke extremely bombastically and dressed vulgarly, covering herself with jewellery from head to toe. Hans Kmoch recalled that when the Alekhines were staying in Vienna, and Nadine went out several times with Kmoch's wife, the waiters in the cafés whispered to each other: that 'Christmas tree' is here again...

Nadezhda Semenovna fussed like a mother over her Shura, as she called her husband, and went everywhere with him. She was with him at the New York tournament in 1927, at the match with Capablanca in Buenos Aires, and at the tournaments in San Remo (1930) and Bled (1931), which were won brilliantly by Alekhine.

If the couple happened to be in Paris, the world champion was permitted to spend two evenings a week in a club or at the bridge table. Alekhine enjoyed bridge and played often. During tournaments, at the bar or in the lobby of the hotel, frequently with partners with whom he had strained relations, but never with Capablanca, of course. Sometimes groups of bridge players got together at his house, and among them there were chess players, too, but Alexander Alexandrovich more often played in a café or a club. There he could encounter very strong bridge players as well as 'rabbits'.

Lev Lyubimov, who subsequently returned to the Soviet Union, recalled that 'Alekhine was a man of great passions, but with some flaws. He considered himself not only the number one chess player, to which claim he had every right, but also a man with a colossal all-embracing intellect, which, of course, raised him above other mortals. The expressions "a man such as myself", "with my gifts", and so on, frequently emanated from him.' Again according to Lyubimov, 'at bridge, too, Alekhine wanted (in vain, though) to achieve the highest class'.

In the Paris garden of the Palais-Royal, opposite the high-spraying fountain, in a pavilion decorated in white and green, there was a chess club. Alekhine could be seen on the terrace of the club, surrounded by numerous people, if he wasn't playing in some tournament abroad. Here Alekhine was among his own, and the conversations were naturally about chess or related topics. Alekhine usually held his meetings with reporters in the pavilion of the Palais-Royal. Alexander Alexandrovich was uncommonly patient with the profanes, as he called the journalists who had no understanding of chess.

In other regards he was a real chess player: in lively mixed company he talked exclusively about chess, and not only about tournaments, prizes and colleagues. Sometimes he didn't hesitate to come up with blindfold variations, if he had a suitable person to talk to, of course, paying no attention to the fact that the other people listening to him didn't even know the rules of the game.

Alekhine often visited the Astrea Masonic lodge on Rue de l'Yvette. While the Masons who remained in Russia after 1917 ended their days in the Solovki prison camp, Russian Freemasonry in emigration was very active. The Russian Masons in France were considerably different both from the prerevolutionary Russian Masons and from mainstream Freemasonry, which had reduced all the ritual and mysticism to a minimum.

Numerous lodges existed, including people with the most varied philosophies. The Astrea Masonic lodge, of which Alekhine became a member, was founded in 1922 in Paris, and the influx to it was so great that it started to branch out into new lodges (Hermes, Lotus, Humayun and Jupiter).

Alekhine, as is apparent from the documents, filled in a membership application form for the lodge on May 21, 1928, a week after a similar application had been made by another immigrant from Russia – grandmaster Osip Bernstein. Alekhine was recommended for initiation into the Masons by Prince Vladimir Vyazemsky, Teslenko and Gvozdanovich. Profanes[1], as uninitiated Masons were called, had to present their biography and answer questions.

Here is a fragment from the questioning of Alexander Alekhine: 'Before the revolution his political convictions were distinguished by their lack of clarity for himself and were not fully-formed. When the Bolsheviks seized power, he thought that something new was beginning, although he did not know what it was exactly. He worked for the Bolsheviks until 1921, occu-

[1] The part of life that took place outside the Masonic brotherhood was called profane, as was the whole world outside the boundaries of the Masonic lodge. The word 'profane' (profanus – Lat. uninitiated) is mentioned quite often in Alekhine's interviews and books. For example, one can read in an article about chess composition: 'Further, let us remember and not hide from the profanes the sad truth about how many of the great artists of the game of chess (for example, Morphy, Steinitz, Pillsbury, Minckwitz and others) were stricken by a disease of the soul, while in the annals of composers such cases are unknown...'

pying the position of interpreter. Became convinced of the vast difference between communist theories and their application in life. Decided to leave Russia. As for his views at present, he does not believe in the possibilities of a monarchy, he is a supporter of a democratic system, but he is prepared to reconcile himself with a constitutional monarchy that implements democratic principles. Does not belong to any party.'

In reply to a question about the motives that had prompted him to join the Masonic lodge, Alekhine

Alekhine soon tired of the Masonic 'zeal' and he often turned the lodge into a chess club.

said that he was striving for this because he was burdened by 'spiritual loneliness'. Osip Bernstein said his reasons for joining the lodge were 'a search for companionship with cultured and educated Russian people who are above all party differences'.

The recommendations for both the applicants to become Freemasons were most favourable, and after an open vote Alekhine and Bernstein were initiated into the Masons on the same day, May 24, 1928. Eugene Alexandrovich Znosko-Borovsky, who worked for the émigré newspaper *Posledniye Novosti*, was also a Mason, albeit a member of another lodge.

Alekhine, Bernstein and Znosko-Borovsky viewed the meetings at the lodges more as conversations with people from the same cultural background, the club meetings they were used to during their life in Russia. The Masons usually met twice a week. The sharp-tongued Vladislav Khodasevich only laughed at them: 'Well I never! They have two free evenings a week, a break from marital bliss. What a privilege!'

Prince Vladimir Vyazemsky, who recommended Alekhine to the Astrea, recalled that Alekhine could often be seen playing chess in the large hall of the Russian Masonic house on Rue de l'Yvette, and his perpetual partner was grandmaster Bernstein. Engrossed in their game, they didn't listen to the speakers very attentively. They were both inveterate smokers, and during these battles a curtain of thick smoke enveloped everyone around them.

Lev Lyubimov, who was also a member of the Astrea, attested: 'Alekhine soon tired of the Masonic "zeal" and he often turned the lodge into a chess club, settling in at the chessboard with grandmaster Bernstein.' At first both maestros came to the Masonic house quite often. In March 1929 Alekhine was elevated to the second degree of Freemasonry, and a year later to the third. It was then that he became a member of another lodge, Friends of Philosophy.

General meetings were held at the Astrea twice a month, with readings and debates. Within their own circle, writers, historians and politicians could permit themselves much more than they could in the newspapers and journals, and they were very open with their brothers. Alekhine spoke at the lodge in March 1935, six months before his match with Euwe, commenting on his opponent's strengths and weaknesses and his own strategy for the match. Bernstein also gave talks on several occasions.

Bernstein constantly travelled for his work, and from 1929 to 1931 he lived in Berlin. Berlin was the city of his youth, in Paris he worked for a branch of a large German company, and when the opportunity to move to Germany arose, Bernstein didn't have to think about it for long. He wrote at the time to his old friend Edward Lasker, who had been settled in America for a long time: 'You know, Berlin has blossomed so much... Sometimes I ask myself why we don't move here for good.' Fortunately, Bernstein returned to Paris two years before Hitler came to power, and Osip Samoylovich began attending the Astrea meetings again.

Alekhine divorced Nadine in 1934 and married the wealthy American Grace Wishar. 'I am the second husband of my fourth wife', the world champion

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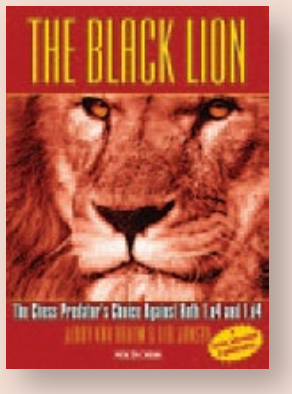

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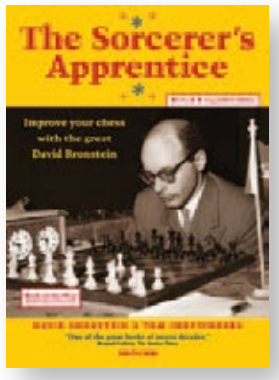

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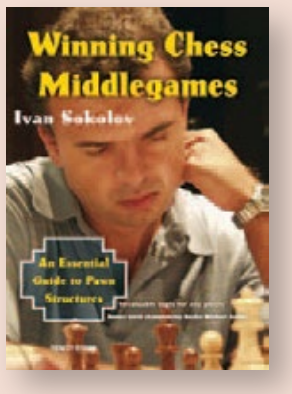

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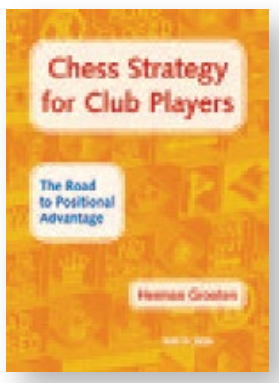

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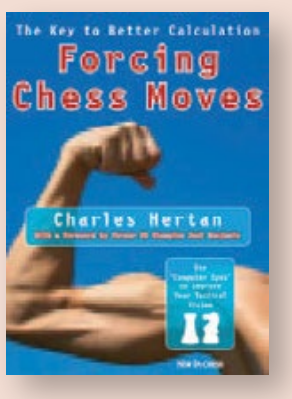

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said, although the publisher of *British Chess Magazine*, Brian Reilly, who knew Grace well, maintained that the marriage to Alekhine was her fourth, too.

Grace herself played chess at amateur level and met the world champion when she asked him to sign the book *200 Chess Games*, which she had received for winning a blitz tournament.

Having graduated in his day from the School of Jurisprudence in St. Petersburg, Alekhine received the rank of Titular Counselor. When he divorced his third wife and married Grace Wishar an epigram made its way around Paris:

He was a titular counselor,
She was a general's widow.
He left Nadine with no farewell,
For peace in his château.

Grace Wishar was indeed the owner of an 18th-century château[II] and a large estate near Dieppe, where, as Alekhine claimed, they bred sheep. Then again, when someone enquired about the number of his livestock, Alekhine admitted that there were only two sheep, wisely noting that even a couple was enough in their time, as Adam and Eve had proved.

Besides the fact that Grace Wishar was a rich woman and no stranger to chess, she completely freed Alekhine from day-to-day concerns and housework, conducted their correspondence and gave him useful advice. 'She is the only person who understands me', Alekhine said of her.

On the subject of his fourth marriage the world champion joked ironically that Grace Wishar had given her husband a wonderful dowry: substantial wealth, a love of chess and an additional 16 years. Indeed, Alekhine wasn't yet 42, while his new bride was already 58. Moreover, she looked much older than her age, so in chess circles people sniped that Alekhine had married Philidor's widow. A story went around Paris, almost certainly invented, that the world champion had started courting a lady who was about the same age as him. Realizing that Alekhine was genuinely interested in her, the lady almost fainted: 'Do I really look that old?'

Constantly playing in foreign tournaments or touring, Alekhine came to the general meetings at the Astrea less and less often. While he was at the general meetings only 10 times in the period from 1928 to 1931, in subsequent years visits to the lodge by brother Alexander were reduced to an absolute minimum, and the invitations sent to him were often returned.

A reception in 1928 with the cream of Russian émigrés. Standing next to Alekhine is his fourth wife Nadine, on the right Osip Bernstein.

Furthermore, all the youthful Masonic rituals began to seem like a pointless waste of time, there was no fresh influx into the lodge, and the average age of the brothers started to rise rapidly. It was then that Vladislav Khodasevich characterized the Russian émigré Freemasonry as 'a cross between a parliament and an orphanage for old people'.

At a meeting in the Astrea on June 12, 1937, the question of excluding brother Alexander Alekhine from the members of the lodge was discussed. At about the same time, disappointed with Masonry, brother Osip Bernstein also left the lodge.

Masonry was based on the principle of secrecy. This secrecy attracted the kind of people whose speciality was secrets, and Soviet Russia's intelligence

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[II] Château Châtellenie in the little town of St.-Aubin-le-Cauf near Dieppe is still there. When I was in Rouen in summer 1999 I got there easily by car in three-quarters of an hour. There is now a hotel in the château, comprising just five rooms. Each room is named after a chess piece: king, queen, rook and knight. The best room is named after Alekhine. The château is imposing, with two huge halls downstairs in which receptions are held from time to time, as I was told. A beautiful park with gravel paths, right next to a river, surrounds the château.

services kept the Russian Masonic lodges under surveillance from the very start.

Up until the mid-thirties the Astrea maintained an overt anti-Soviet orientation, but then it started becoming more loyal to the Soviet Union, getting more and more 'red'. It wasn't this fact, of course, that was the reason why Alekhine stopped visiting the Masonic lodge: he himself was already searching for contacts with the Soviets, sending congratulations and greetings to newspapers and magazines in the Soviet Union.

After Alekhine officially left Soviet Russia, the attitude to him in his mother country could be termed hesitant and cautious, though also with a negative overtone. In the book by Mikhail Kogan *History of the Game of Chess in Russia*, which was completed after the New York tournament of 1927 and before the match with Capablanca, Alekhine is still described in a benevolent spirit.

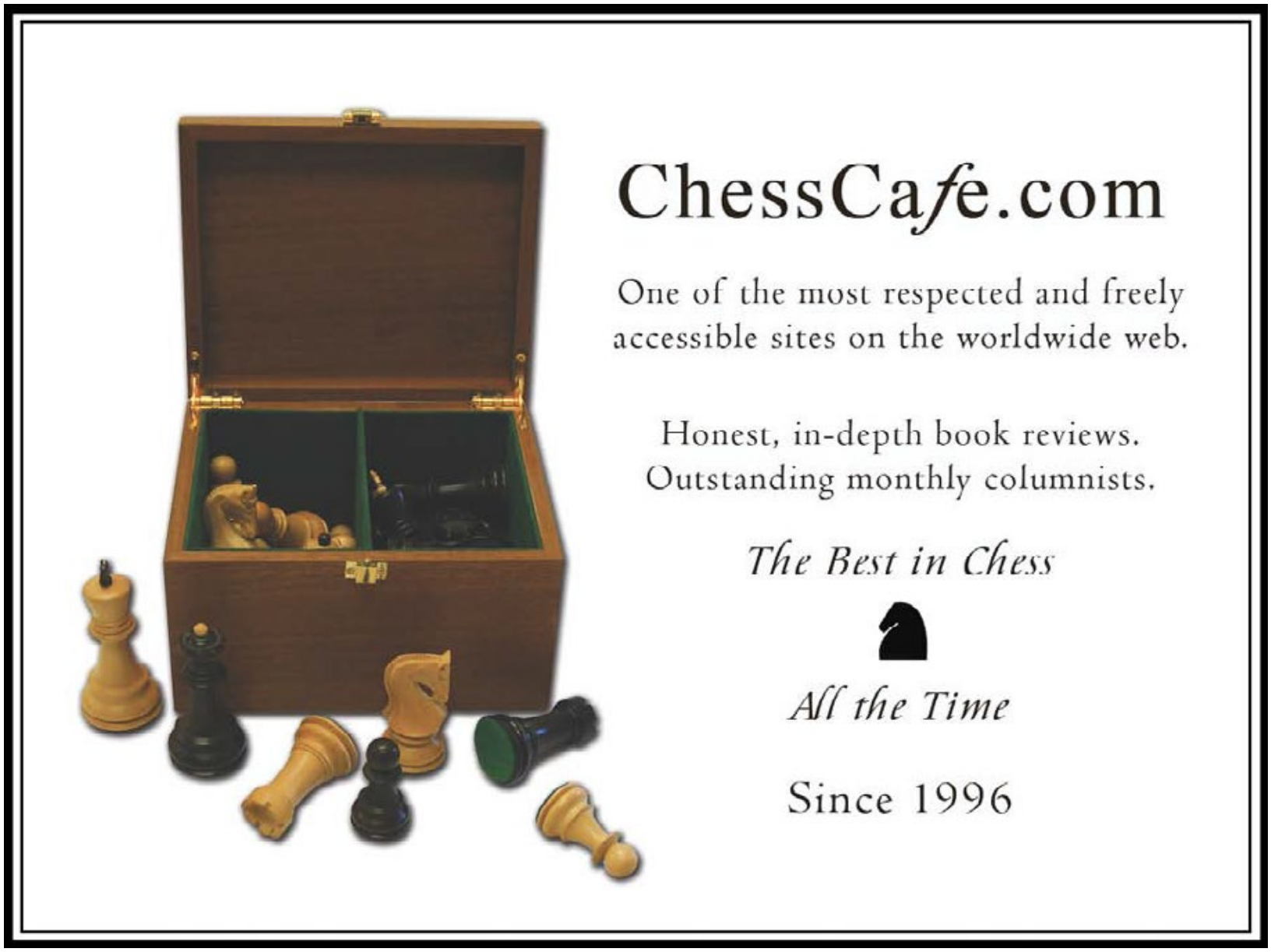
Although Alekhine was also officially an 'alien element', this didn't prevent him from regularly sending correspondence to the magazine *Shakhmaty*, published by Nenarokov in parallel with the semi-official organ, and communicating with Grigoriev and Levenfish.

The attitude to Alekhine changed sharply following the speech he gave at the Paris Russian Club after his victory over Capablanca. The day after the celebration the émigré newspapers quoted his speech, which concluded with a toast: 'That the myth of the invincibility of the Bolsheviks should be dispelled just as the myth of the invincibility of Capablanca has been dispelled!'

Clearly both the speech and the toast did not go unnoticed in the USSR. *Shakhmatny Listok* published a devastating article targeting the world champion, who had poured out 'a stream of filth and slander against Soviet Russia and against the struggle that is being waged by the Russian working class.'

And the chief prosecutor and head of Soviet chess, Nikolai Krylenko, declared: 'The renegade Alekhine has placed himself outside the chess movement in the USSR. After his speech in the Russian Club we are finished with citizen Alekhine – he is our enemy, and henceforth we must treat him only as an enemy. Talent is talent, and politics is politics, and it is forbidden to maintain relations with renegades, whether they be Alekhine or Bogoljubow.' From then on the name Alekhine appeared in the Soviet press only accompanied by the epithets renegade, White Guardist, turncoat and monarchist.

But if it was possible to write of Chaliapin that his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voice was gone, the great bass was sung out and he was only a pale shadow of the former Chaliapin, with Alekhine it was more difficult – his results spoke for themselves.

A few more years passed. The troubled years that at first had seemed to many immigrants like a bad dream that would soon end had become everyday life. Memories of the motherland were being replaced more and more by stories about her, and for the overwhelming majority dreams of returning home had finally evaporated. But some had decided to return no matter what Russia was, not fully understanding what awaited them at home.

It was then that Alekhine began sending telegrams and congratulations to the chess players of the 'new Steel Russia'. He realized that there was no point waiting for changes in the motherland and simply began identifying Russia with the USSR.

The Austrian master Hans Kmoch was living permanently in Holland at the time. During big tournaments and matches he was called every day from Moscow with the latest news. Alekhine knew about this and hoped that one day he would be called, too.

'He has already heard from Flohr, Fine and other 'discoverers' of the Soviet Union,' Kmoch recalled, 'that chess tours there can be very profitable. In Soviet Russia he could earn as many roubles as he wanted, they asserted, and if he exchanged them for valuables he could take them to France. Alekhine was simply thirsting for an invitation from the Soviet Union.'

Without doubt, his colleagues' tales about the 'chess El Dorado' influenced Alekhine in making his decision to get closer to the Soviets. What did it matter that the Bolsheviks were in power there, whom he disliked and had fled from? Sergey Prokofiev, for example, whom Alekhine remembered very well from their St. Petersburg days and whom he sometimes met in Paris, also had a very sceptical attitude towards the Bolsheviks, but now, having travelled to the Soviet Union several times for concerts, had moved to Moscow for good. And according to the rumours, the famous composer was leading a luxurious lifestyle there and planning to go on tour again, this time to Europe.

And although Don-Aminado continues to joke in the Russian calendar for 1935: 'Six bridge games. Four balls. Breeze and light shower. Firm rumour the Bolsheviks have fallen from power', everyone understands that this is only a sad smile, the doggerel is very far from the truth, and the Bolsheviks' power appears to have established itself seriously and for a long time.

In a note composed by Krylenko and addressed to Stalin, the republic's chief prosecutor quoted from a telegram that arrived from Holland in November 1935 from Alekhine, in which the world champion congratulated Soviet chess players on the holiday commemorating the anniversary of the October Revolution. Krylenko appended his comments to the text of Alekhine's telegram: 'When printing the telegram from the current world champion, the White Guardist Alekhine, the editors of *Izvestiya* consider it necessary to point out that political treachery and renegade status cannot be atoned for as easily as citizen Alekhine seems to think... In this matter he must be able to show awareness of his guilt and readiness to make amends for it. Without this no amount of talent will save Alekhine from the deserved scorn with which he is treated in the USSR. Please send your instructions on this subject.'

A resolution was affixed without delay: 'I suggest printing Alekhine's telegram without a commentary. Stalin.' Is it necessary to say that Alekhine's congratulations were printed without any kind of editorial comment?

These congratulations, which were published in *Izvestiya* and reprinted later in the Russian-language émigré press, alienated Alekhine from a significant number of the immigrants. Many, many people stopped speaking to Alekhine. What? A man who just recently had been cursed by the Soviet of Deputies and the Bolsheviks congratulates these same Bolsheviks on the anniversary of their coup, achieved by exiles?

'Keep this moral in mind, reader, and with that also do not forget Alekhine, beaten by Euwe and in defeat going over to the Soviets', a former supporter of the now already former world champion exclaimed in the pages of a Paris daily.

But Alekhine himself, far removed from any sentimentality, had little interest in public opinion: he didn't care what other people might think about him. He always behaved in a way that was beneficial to himself above all.

The excellent books by Alexander Alexandrovich Alekhine contain generous sprinklings of Latin words and expressions, undoubtedly a consequence of the classical education he had received at one of the best Moscow grammar schools and at the School of Jurisprudence in St. Petersburg. One that was a favourite of his and that he used often was 'nolens volens' (whether willing or unwilling).

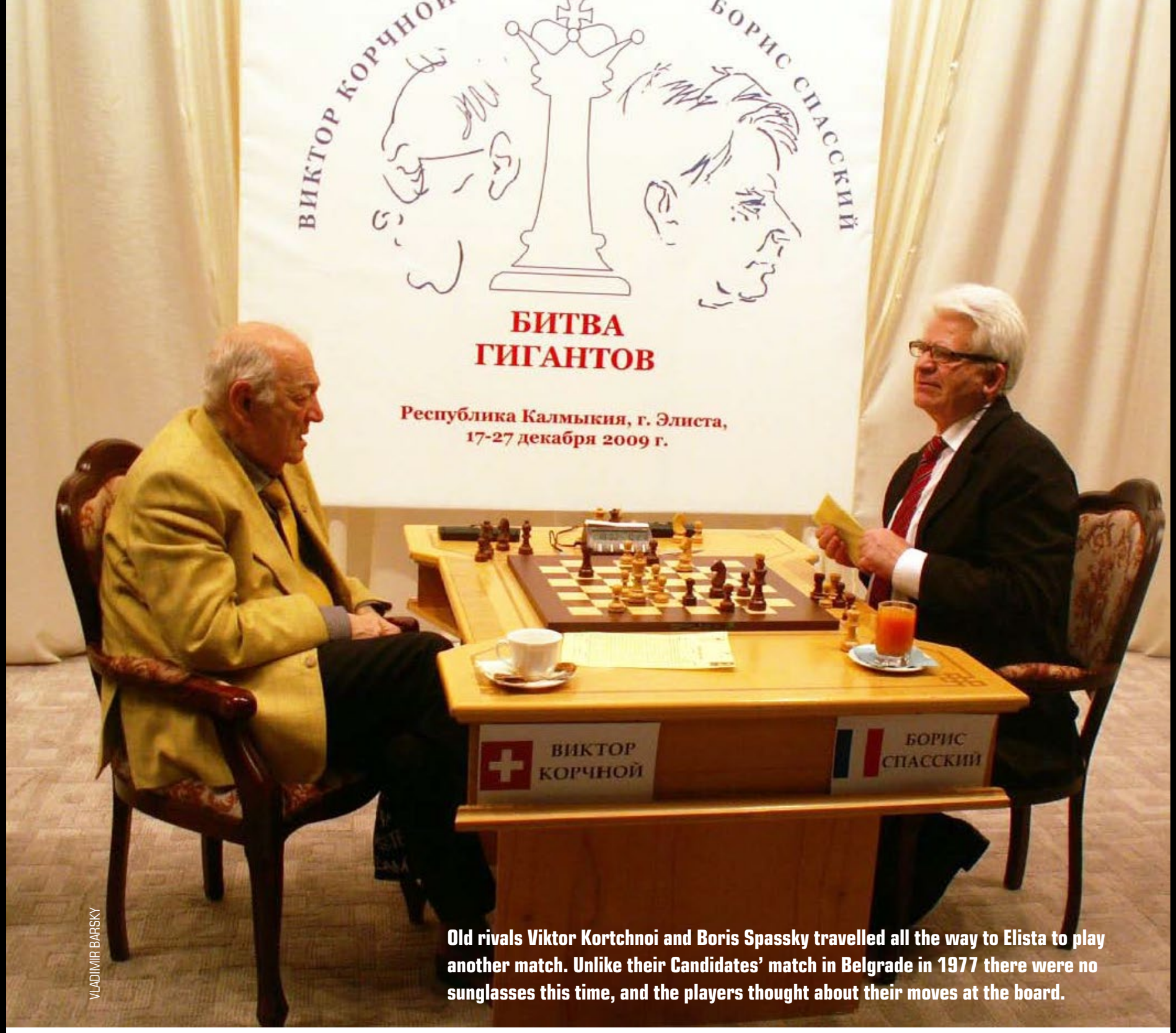
If the chess genius fought uncompromisingly at the board against the willpower and plans of his opponent, in life, bowing to strength, he always swam with the current, believing that circumstances presented him with only one choice – to submit to it nolens volens.

The contest in Elista between Boris Spassky, the 10th world champion, and Viktor Kortchnoi, the many-time challenger to the throne, bore the proud title 'Battle of the giants', and it fitted in excellently with the currently popular conception of a 'nostalgia show'. **Vladimir Barsky** reports from a snow-covered Kalmykian capital.

Viktor Lvovich and Boris Vasilievich meet again in Elista

The match of eight games with the FIDE time control (an hour and a half for 40 moves and half an hour to the end of the game, plus 30 seconds a move) was officially dedicated to the 400th anniversary of the voluntary entry of Kalmykia into the Russian empire. But another round date was jokingly named: in 2009 Kortchnoi and Spassky could have celebrated a 'combined' 150th anniversary (Viktor Lvovich was 78, and Boris Vasilievich 72). The legendary grandmasters played on the same stage where Topalov and Kramnik battled in 2006, but on this occasion a protective screen was not needed, and the players and spectators were not searched with mine-detectors – only on the first day 'for the sake of procedure' were the police armed with these trusty instruments. In general, the atmosphere at the match was calm and good-natured.

How the idea of this match arose is something that I did not fully understand. I will repeat two versions that I have heard. Here is the first. It will be remembered that in 1999 Kortchnoi and Spassky played an exhibition match in St. Petersburg in honour of the anniversary of the local university, from which they had both graduated in their youth. Ten years had passed, the next anniversary had arrived, but in their native city money for a new contest was not found; however, the festivities in Kalmykia were very opportune, and Ilyumzhinov agreed to hold yet another event. Second version: the match was devised and organized by Ilyumzhinov. Two and a half years ago during the Candidates' matches in Elista, the 10th world champion carried out some honorary and non-onerous duty as, I think, chairman of the appeals committee. One remembers Boris Vasilievich's fashionable shorts, in which he strode about in the Government House. The Challengers behaved correctly, there was no work for the appeals committee, and with nothing else to do Spassky often joined the commentators: he mixed with the spectators and chatted with them. All this went down very well with the public. At the closing ceremony of the matches, Ilyumzhinov presented Spassky with a key to one of the cottages in Chess City. Previously the FIDE President had already presented (by letter) another cottage to Bobby Fischer, but he did not in fact come to Elista. But Spassky said that he was ready to come again, and then a reason was found – a new contest with Kortchnoi. I should re-



VLADIMIR BARSKY

Old rivals Viktor Kortchnoi and Boris Spassky travelled all the way to Elista to play another match. Unlike their Candidates' match in Belgrade in 1977 there were no sunglasses this time, and the players thought about their moves at the board.

mind you that this was already the fourth match between the two outstanding grandmasters: apart from the afore-mentioned exhibition match, they played two final Candidates' matches: in 1968 Spassky won, and in 1977 – Kortchnoi.

If Viktor Lvovich had become world champion, perhaps he would have led the same kind of calm and measured life as Spassky. But now it is hard to avoid the thought that Kortchnoi simply cannot play enough: he constantly journeys from tournament to tournament, and gives simultaneous displays. He travelled to Elista directly from London, where he was working as a commentator on the super-tournament. At the Moscow Vnukovo Airport, Viktor Lvovich and his wife Petra were joined by a group of 25 – arbiters, journalists, and guests of the match. I went up to greet Kortchnoi and his spouse. The first thing that Viktor Lvovich did was to enquire:

'You don't know how the tournament in London ended? I left half an hour before the end.'

On learning that Carlsen had held on to clear first place, he said, as it appeared to me, with a certain disappointment:

'Ah, that's the way it goes!'

Later I asked Kortchnoi to share his impressions of some of the young players, in particular Carlsen. After a prolonged pause he replied:

'I have seen some of their games, but I have also seen the behaviour of some of the young giants at the board. I have gained my own impression of them.

'For example, I regard Aronian as one of the chess geniuses – this is a person who is capable of finding colossal things at the board. As for Magnus Carlsen, I would use an expression which may not be fully understandable to you –

'con man'. I have in mind the fact that he does not simply play chess, but he possesses a colossal psychic power, like that of Mikhail Tal, and he influences his opponents at the board, forcing them to make mistakes. That's what they said about Tal, and that's how it was in fact.

'Generally speaking, incredible things happen. For example, Magnus Carlsen always draws No.1. Perhaps this says something, wouldn't you agree? Does this have anything to do with chess, or not? He is a person who is capable of incredible things. It was difficult for me to find his moves. They are seemingly not bad, and at the same time they are aimed at the opponent playing weakly. He is considered a genius; probably he will soon reach a rating of 2900. But this is not altogether a game of chess! This is my personal opinion; perhaps others are simply overcome by admiration for his play.

'There are also other good, interesting players. For example, Nakamura is also a distinctive player. But to talk about genius – that is a difficult matter.'

– *'Who do you think is the favourite in the Anand-Topalov match?'*

'At the board Anand is much stronger.'

Viktor Lvovich accentuated the words 'at the board'. Kortchnoi is someone who knows perfectly well that in matches for the world championship the battle is conducted not only at the chess table, but also 'over the entire perimeter'.

But let's return to Vnukovo. Alas, because of strong winds and snowfall in the south of Russia, the flight that day to Elista was cancelled, and for twelve hours we had to sit on our luggage. Kortchnoi did not complain at all, but happily mixed with fellow-passengers, while Petra quietly solved crosswords. Viktor Lvovich is no stranger to travel adventures: for example, in 1951, on his way by train to a tournament in Odessa, he slept for two whole days on the floor, under the lower bunk, while in 1977 the Mercedes taking Kortchnoi and his helper to the match with Spassky overturned. Viktor Lvovich remembered how several years ago he and Petra were stuck in the middle of Brazil, since they did not have tickets for a regular flight. And how the people who had invited him sent a personal plane for them. I don't know if Ilyumzhinov has a personal plane, but it is known for sure that in bad weather even he is forced to reach Elista via other cities.

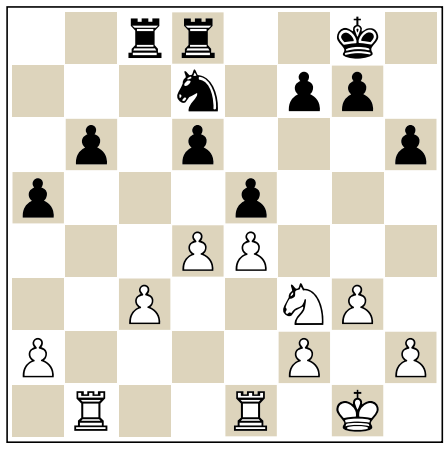
In the end Kortchnoi and his wife flew on the evening flight to Stavropol, where a car provided by the organizers was awaiting them. They reached Chess City at two in the morning.

Because of ticket problems the main group got there even later, and we arrived only in time for breakfast. In the café we met Spassky, dressed in a chunky sweater. After greeting the familiar faces, the ex-champion joked:

'I've already been stuck here for three days in Elista!'

Fortunately, the weather soon improved: it became warmer, the wind dropped and the sun appeared. And it turned out that Elista in winter can be enchantingly pretty!

Like many of those with whom I associated, I considered Kortchnoi to be the clear favourite. Nothing affects playing strength as much as match practice, and in this Spassky was clearly lacking. Yes, Boris Vasilievich often mixes with young players and passes on his experience, and to maintain his form he plays blitz incognito on the Internet and even plays by correspondence. All this is not bad, but it is also desirable to regularly sit down at the board in normal tournaments. The start of the match apparently confirmed this prognosis.



Kortchnoi-Spassky
Elista 2009 (1)
position after 23...♖ac8

I think that at this moment, after making the strong and natural move 23...♖ac8, Spassky offered a draw. It would appear that Kortchnoi had no reason to decline: he was tired after the difficult journey, and his position was in no way better, the weakness of the b6 pawn being balanced by the weakness of the c3 pawn. Later Viktor Lvovich admitted that at that moment the advantage was possibly on Black's side. Nevertheless, the uncompromising Kortchnoi wanted to play on!

24.♖e3 ♖c7 25.dxe5 dxe5 26.♔g2 ♖dc8

Somewhat direct. 26...♖e8!? came into consideration, defending the e5 pawn and freeing the knight for an attack on the e4 pawn.

27.♖d1 ♘f6

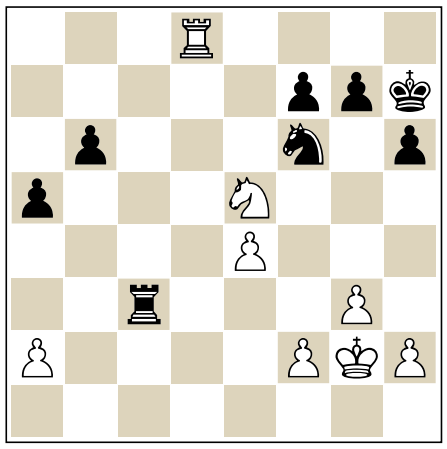
Provoking simplification. Spassky wants to gain a draw 'from a position of weakness'. Meanwhile, he should have begun fighting for an advantage: 27...f6 28.♖d6 b5!. Now in the event of 29.♘h4 ♘c5 30.♖b6 ♖b7 31.♖xb7 ♘xb7 32.♘f5 ♖d8 the initiative passes to Black, while if 29.♖a6 there is the unpleasant 29...♖xc3 30.♖xc3 ♖xc3 31.♖xa5 ♘c5 32.♖xb5 ♘xe4, and almost the same situation arises as in the game, but 'in a

mirror reflection': Black has good chances of winning the a2 pawn and reaching an endgame with four pawns against three on one wing.

28.♘xe5 ♖xc3?!

It would have been far stronger to interpose 28...♖c5!, evicting the knight from the centre or provoking the unfavourable move f2-f4.

29.♖xc3 ♖xc3 30.♖d8+ ♔h7



31.f3!

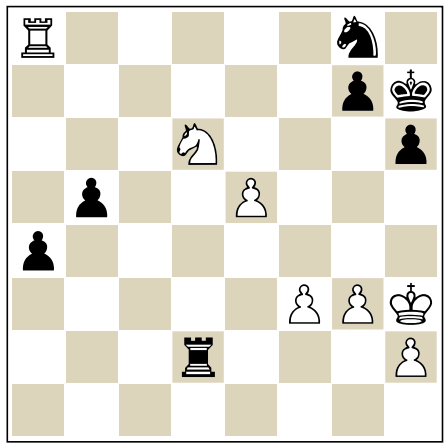
Spassky missed this quiet move; he was expecting only the direct variation with the exchange on f7 and e4. At first sight it is risky to allow Black two connected passed pawns, but Kortchnoi had made a subtle assessment of the position: the pawns do not advance very quickly, whereas the king at h7 proves to be in danger.

31...♖c2+ 32.♔h3 ♖xa2 33.♘xf7 ♘g8

Sadly necessary, since in the event of 33...b5 34.♖h8+ ♔g6 35.♘e5+ the black king comes under attack, for example: 35...♔g5 36.♖f8! (36.♖f8 is also very strong after 35...♔h5). Now if 36...a4 there follows 37.♖f7, winning the g7 pawn, while after 36...h5 White has a forced mate: 37.f4+ ♔h6 38.♘f7+ ♔h7 39.♖h8+ ♔g6 40.♘e5 mate.

34.♘d6 ♖d2 35.e5 a4 36.♖a8 b5?

Of course, Black was already in difficulties, but it was still possible to defend: 36...♖d5! 37.♖xa4 (37.f4 is harmless: 37...♖a5! 38.♖xa5 bxa5 39.♘b5 ♔g6 40.♔g4 h5+ 41.♔f3 ♘h6 42.♔e4 ♔f7, and the pawns on a5 and a4 tie down the white knight) 37...♖xe5 38.♖b4 ♘f6 39.♖xb6 – Black should be able to hold the endgame with three pawns against two without particular difficulty.



37.f4!

A second move of the f-pawn which Spassky overlooked. He was hoping for 37.♘xb5 ♖d5!, picking up the e5 pawn.

37...b4

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In the event of 37...♖b2 38.♖a7! White would again set his sights on the enemy king. But now Black loses both of his passed pawns.

38.♖xa4 b3 39.♖b4 b2 40.♖b7

A final trap – 40.♘c4? ♖d4!.

40...♖c2 41.♘f5! ♔h8 42.♘e3 ♖d2 43.♘c4 ♖c2 44.♘xb2 h5 45. ♘d3 ♘h6 46.♖b2 ♖c7 47.♖b1

Black resigned.

The most interesting moment for the spectators came when the grandmasters stopped playing and began analysing the game directly on the stage: one could quietly approach the stage and see how the great masters analyse. Spassky moves the pieces with a rather dismissive air, as though everything that is happening on the board is not very important and does not especially concern him. Occasionally some jokes are exchanged; for example, when Kortchnoi stops to think, not agreeing with a move suggested by Spassky, Boris Vasilievich repeats the well-known phrase of Semen Furman: 'Hold on, old chap, I've analysed this variation!'

The joke is not so inoffensive as it may seem at first sight: for long years the Leningrad grandmaster and theoretician helped Kortchnoi, but then he switched to Karpov and helped him to become world champion. But Kortchnoi tried not to react to such attempts to 'egg him on'. Usually he also turned a deaf ear to his opponent's general reasoning and tried to find a concrete solution in every position.

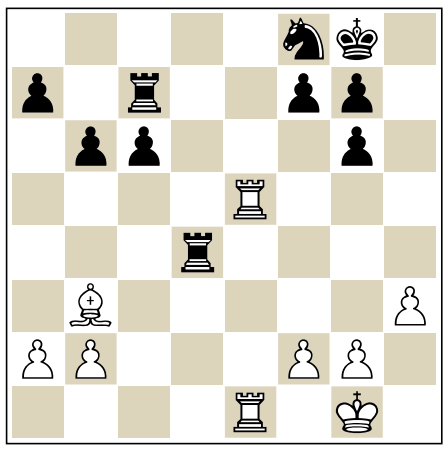
During the analysis of the second game, through the mound of variations the contours of a direct attack on the black king suddenly emerged. Spassky's eyes lit up, and not a trace remained of his feigned imperturbability! But equally swiftly he took himself in hand and again assumed his mask.

I remember that at this moment the thought occurred to me: the match will prove much tougher than it was initially assumed.

In the second game Spassky played the opening in very original fashion – 1.e4 e6 2.c4!?. At the press conference after the game Kortchnoi said:

'Spassky was obviously counting on the surprise effect: I have never had this position as Black (and, after all, the French has been his favourite weapon since his youth – V.B.). Spassky played the opening with his sights set on a long game, and in the end gained an advantage. My position became rather unpleasant, it was difficult for me to move, he occupied almost the entire board with his pieces and saddled me with weaknesses. I made some mistakes, and at one point White was clearly better.'

By-passing the opening and the middlegame, let us go straight to the endgame. White has just sacrificed a pawn, but he will soon regain it and obtain an advantage thanks to the superiority of his powerful bishop over the passive knight.



Spassky-Kortchnoi
Elista 2009 (2)
position after 31...♖xd4

32.♖e7

V.K.: 'In the analysis after the game Spassky pointed out a very interesting continuation, involving a pawn sacrifice, which I had not seen at all: 32.♖e8 ♖dd7 33. h4!?. Black would have had to try and stand firm, without doing anything. I think that this is not so terrible, but in general it was the only chance of playing for a win. Spassky apparently wanted more, but he achieved less – a minimal advantage, and he himself – in a position with an extra pawn – offered a draw. I don't know why he didn't play 32.♖e8; it seemed to me that he did not feel like calculating variations, or, on the contrary, he was afraid to sacrifice a pawn: suppose that later nothing came of it?'

– *'Spassky said that "in his previous life" he would have definitely given up the pawn, whereas now he has no particular ambitions. If you had been in his place, would you have gone in for a not fully clear positional sacrifice?'*

V.K.: 'If I say that I would have done, this will signify that I have more fighting spirit than Spassky. Although, in general, it was Spassky's idea to play this match, and so to talk about his lack of fighting spirit would also be incorrect.'

Let us examine in a little more detail the continuation which after the game the maestros analysed for some twenty minutes. Naturally, Kortchnoi saw the move 32. ♖e8 and was intending 32...♖dd7, in order to prevent the doubling of rooks on the 8th rank: 33.♖a8 ♖e7 etc. But Spassky had seen the plan with 33.h4! – White does not force events, but calmly strengthens his position, not allowing Black to escape from the pin by g6-g5, g7-g6 and ♔g7.

Initially Kortchnoi did not take this idea at all seriously and tried to give up a pawn with g6-g5, but Spassky did not take it and replied h4-h5. After coming under a mating attack a couple of times, Viktor Lvovich switched to 33...b5 34. a4 bxa4 with the idea of creating counterplay on the b-file, but here too he obtained bad positions. In

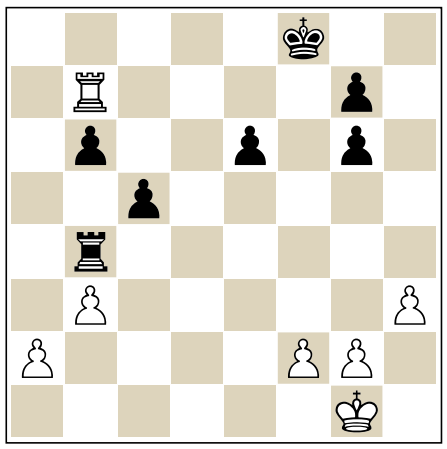
VLADIMIR BARSKY

Elista in winter. Is that a Communist star on top of the Christmas tree next to the Buddhist temple?

the end the two players concluded that Black should play 33...a6 and show patience, not trying to attack the bishop with the pawns. White has a mass of tempting continuations (after all, Black has no counterplay), but a clear way to gain an advantage is not apparent.

However, also after the continuation in the game Spassky still had good winning chances.

32...♖xe7 33.♖xe7 ♘e6 34.♖xa7 c5 35.♗xe6 fxe6 36.♖b7 ♖b4 37.b3 ♔f8



38.♔f1?

This move is the best confirmation of Spassky's lack of training. He has conducted the game splendidly, but, still with some 15 minutes in reserve, he overlooks a straightforward simplifying operation. 38.g3 was correct, in order to take the king to the queenside via g2-f3-e3 etc. In this case Black's defence would have been difficult.

38...c4!

This move followed instantly – Kortchnoi did not miss his chance.

39.bxc4 ♖xc4 40.♖xb6 ♖c1+ 41.♔e2 ♖c2+ 42.♔e3 ♖xa2 43.♖xe6 ♔f7 44.♖b6 ♖a3+ 45.♔f4 ♖a2 46.♔g3 g5

Draw.

Kortchnoi was asked whether it could be said that the result was influenced by Spassky's lack of practice. Viktor Lvovich replied in his own style, rather rhetorically:

'In general we are neither of us very young. If you like, I am a little older. If you are talking about lack of practice, then I, unfortunately, have strange kinds of opponents: I play either against young women, or against very old people of my own age, and that is all. Therefore it can be said that a lack of practice also affects me! I play a lot, but my opponents are usually not very strong and they understand the game far worse than Spassky does.'

After the third game Kortchnoi firmly rejected the traditional joint analysis with his opponent. After making his way to the press centre, he explained to the journalists:

'Spassky has begun boasting, asking; "But why was I worse?" Well, because all his pieces stood badly! He made a draw a pawn down – well done, but he wanted to show me that he had played very cleverly!'

Kortchnoi was feeling very emotional, and he did not hide his vexation that he had missed excellent winning chances. But Spassky remained on the stage and began discussing variations with the chief arbiter, Boris Khropov. Until the end of the match the ex-world champion avoided associating with the press; it is even surprising that by education he is a journalist. By contrast, Kortchnoi willingly expressed his opinions on various topics, not sparing either himself, or others:

'I think that now I am very weak in opening theory, since I do not work very confidently with a computer. Young opponents constantly outplay me in the initial stage. And what does Spassky do? He remembers his openings of 60 years ago. Over the past 60 years something has changed there, but he doesn't know this and he plays them!'

Kortchnoi apparently wanted to 'let off steam', and he began remembering the final Candidates' match with Spassky which took place in Belgrade in 1977. By

then the two players had already been living in the West for a year: Kortchnoi had requested political asylum in Holland, while Spassky had married a French woman, obtained dual citizenship and moved to Paris. In Kortchnoi's opinion, in Belgrade his opponent used the help of Soviet experts, including parapsychologists – he said that this was a dress rehearsal for Baguio. In his autobiography Viktor Lvovich effectively accused the 10th champion of unsporting play. To my question, whether he had ever discussed with Spassky the match in Belgrade and his book, Kortchnoi replied:

'No, this is a no-go area in our relations. If something was not right, he could have publicly objected to me, but also for that Spassky lacked the spirit.'

The fourth game ended in a draw on the 22nd move. Spassky gave a brief resume:

'Today we blundered like a couple of idiots!'

He was supported by Kortchnoi, who said that 'the giants had grown old' and therefore their interesting ideas were interspersed with ridiculous oversights. In my view, the great players are being too severe on themselves. In his favourite French Defence Kortchnoi demonstrated an important novelty and achieved a good game. Yes, he overlooked an important intermediate move in one variation (although Kortchnoi quickly realized his mistake and thought about how to correct it), but this oversight did not affect the overall assessment of the position. Incidentally, soon Kortchnoi moderated his assessment and said that he was happy with some of his manoeuvres. He is now writing a book on the French Defence, and this game may well find its way there.

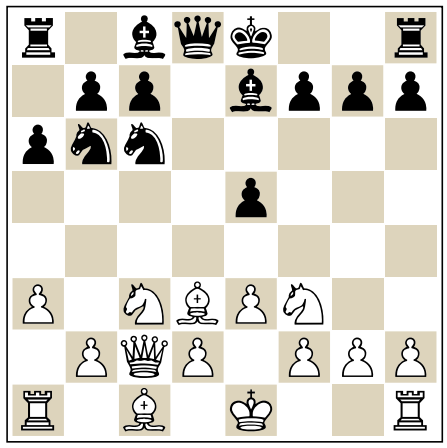
The fifth game, played after a rest day, was Spassky's best creative achievement in the match.

VLADIMIR BARSKY

In the eight games that were played Viktor Kortchnoi mixed good and bad play, but as usual he showed excellent form once a microphone was put in front of him.

EO 7.3 – A28
Viktor Kortchnoi
Boris Spassky
Elista 2009 (5)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.a3 A favourite variation with Kortchnoi.
4...d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♕c2 ♗e7 7.e3 a6 8.♗c4 ♘b6 It would appear that this natural move is a novelty.
9.♗d3 A typical manoeuvre: White makes it difficult for the opponent to castle and intends to play his bishop to e4, to intensify the pressure on the e5 pawn. Of course, with the benefit of hindsight it is easy to argue that a different bishop move should have been chosen. For example, after 9.♗a2 ♗g4 10.b4 ♕d7 11.♗b2 a complicated position is reached with chances for both sides. Even so, I think that Kortchnoi's move also has every right to exist.

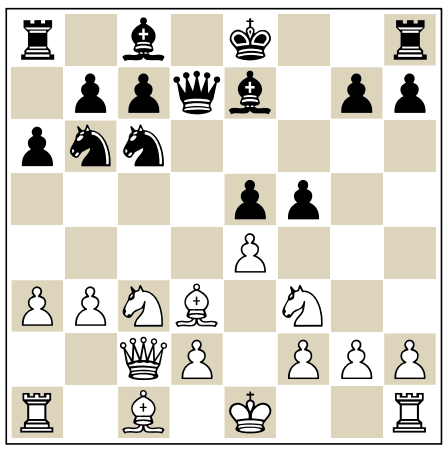


9...♕d7!! The two exclamation marks are for the originality and beauty of the idea. After the routine 9...g6 White has the unpleasant 10.♗e4 ♕d6 11.0-0, and if 11...f5, 12.♗xc6+ bxc6 13.e4 f4 14.♘e2 c5 15.b4!, with a dangerous initiative. Spassky avoids all this, because now after 10.♗e4 f5! 11.♗xc6 ♕xc6 the e5 pawn is immune: 12.♘xe5? ♕xg2. And Black wants to play f7-f5, without weakening his kingside in the process.

10.b3?

It would appear that Kortchnoi underestimated his opponent's idea. White would certainly not want to go onto the defensive after 10.♗e2 f5 11.d3, but he had quite a good alternative: 10.0-0 f5 11.e4 f4 (here 11...g5 is not so dangerous: 12.exf5 g4 13.♘e1 ♘d4 14.♕d1 etc.) 12.♘d5! ♘xd5 13.exd5 ♕xd5 14.♗xh7 ♘d4 15.♘xd4 ♕xd4 16.♗g6+ ♔d8 with an extremely complicated position.

10...f5 11.e4



11...g5!

That day Spassky was irresistible. I should mention that after the game there was neither a joint analysis, nor a press conference – after his crushing defeat Kortchnoi departed immediately. But I was nevertheless able to learn Viktor Lvovich's opinion during dinner:

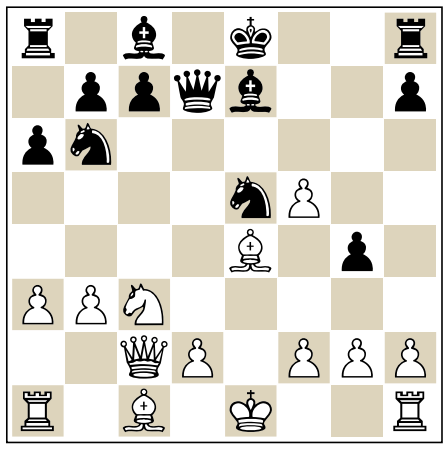
'Spassky is excellently prepared for all my openings! He admitted today that he has two players helping him. Before the match Spassky said that the score was of no importance: and that whatever the outcome the prize fund should be shared fifty-fifty. What a poser! And on the free day I was invited by the organizers to have a drink of cognac...'

Did a glass or two (it would hardly be any more) of strong spirit so affect Kortchnoi's form? Or was he wanting to 'wind himself up'? At the same time, he did not forget to add that 'I saw the move g5 before Spassky did'. Whether earlier or later, Spassky also saw this energetic thrust, aimed at seizing control of the d4-square, after which White had a difficult position.

12.exf5

Kortchnoi decides to give up his knight. In the computer's opinion, stronger was 12.0-0 g4 13.♘e1 f4, but this looks altogether depressing.

12...g4 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♗e4



14...♘c6!

Spassky arranges his pieces excellently: the d4-square is the key to the position. Rybka initially suggests 14...0-0 15.h3 ♖xf5!?, but after 16.♗b2 ♖h5 17.0-0-0 it changes its mind: the situation becomes sharper, which is exactly what White wants.

15.♘e2 ♗f6 16.♖b1

Good or bad, 16.♗b2 had to be played. When the pieces are undeveloped it is impossible to put up a fight.

16...♕d6 17.h3 gxh3!

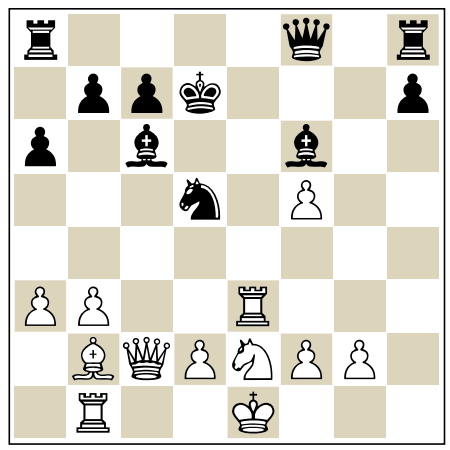
Spassky is not afraid of ghosts: he realizes perfectly well that with his rook alone White cannot attack him.

18.♖xh3 ♗d7 19.♖d3 ♕f8

The only move, but good enough. 19...♕h2 20.♖h3 ♕d6 21.♖d3 would have led to a repetition of moves.

20.♗xc6 ♗xc6 21.♖e3+ ♔d7 22.♗b2 ♘d5

The situation has stabilized, and the knight at d5 occupies an impregnable position. How beautifully Spassky has deployed his minor pieces! It only remains to bring the queen's rook into play and to castle artificially.



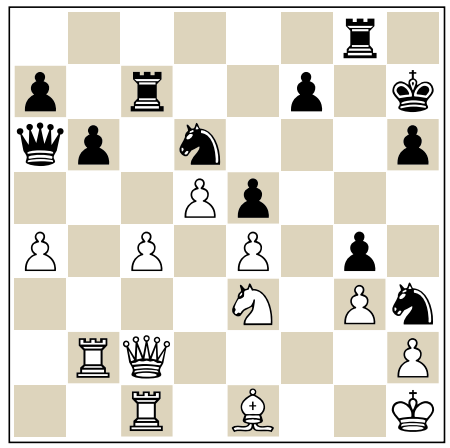
23.♕d3 ♗xb2 24.♖xb2 ♕xa3 25.♖c2 ♖ae8 26.♕d4 ♔c8

White resigned.

The following day, some three hours before the start of the game, I met Viktor Lvovich at the entrance to his cottage. He explained:

'I'm going for a walk! This is the first occasion in all the time I've been here, in Elista.'

It is probable that Kortchnoi possesses enormous powers of auto-suggestion: before the fifth game he convinced himself that he had violated his regime, and before the sixth he tried to put himself in a competitive mood: he went out for a walk, and breathed some fresh air... Whatever the reason, he won the game.



Spassky-Kortchnoi
Elista 2009 (6)
position after 30...g4

Kortchnoi has played very aggressively, but Spassky did not even

think of going onto the defensive. In this tense position, where the battle is proceeding over the entire board, White's chances are nevertheless better. True, he needs to find several accurate prophylactic moves, to avoid missing some tactical stroke. The computer suggests the clever 31.♖a2!?. Why this 'mysterious' rook move? It transpires that after 31...♘xc4 32.♕e2 b5 33.axb5 ♕b6 34.♖xc4 ♖xc4 the rook begins operating at full power: 35.♖a6 ♕d4 36.♖xh6+! ♔xh6 37.♘f5+ ♔h5 38.♘xd4 ♖xd4 39.♕c2 with advantage. And in the event of 31...♖gc8 32.♕e2 h5 33.♕f1 White has everything defended and at any moment he will begin an offensive on the kingside. Of course, without a computer 31.♖a2 is not an easy move to find, but White also has a good and purely human solution: 31.♗c3 ♖gc8 32.♕e2 with similar ideas – to strengthen the centre and gradually drive back the enemy pieces.

But Spassky played hastily and made a bad oversight.

31.♗b4?! ♘xc4!

Forced, but very strong. However, I don't think that it came as a surprise to Spassky.

32.♗d6?

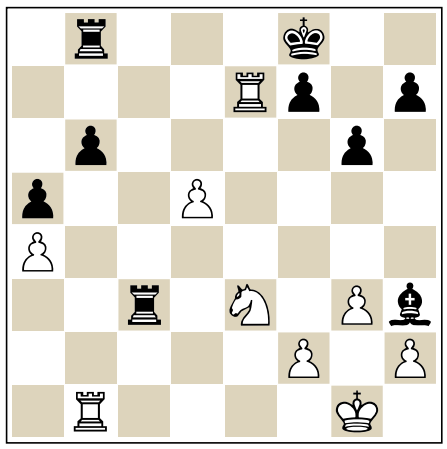
This move, inseparably linked with the previous one, was made very quickly. If Spassky had stopped to think a little, he would have seen his mistake and chosen the more tenacious 32.♖e1.

32...♘xd6! 33.♕xc7 ♖c8 A simple refutation. **34.♕xc8 ♘xc8 35.♘xg4 ♘d6** White resigned.

Kortchnoi again took the lead, but the win did not greatly please him. He declared heatedly:

'Who needs these "blunders of the century"? Today's game shows that such matches should be altogether forbidden! I will also make some blunder, just you see!'

Auto-suggestion is a terrible thing! Of course, the following day Viktor Lvovich 'kept his word'.



Kortchnoi-Spassky
Elista 2009 (7)
position after 37...♔f8

38.d6? The pawn 'breaks ranks'. After 38.♖e4! the game is equal.

38...♖bc8 39.f3 ♖d3 White loses a pawn without any compensation.

40.♖e4 Bad is 40.♖xb6? ♖c1+ 41.♔f2 ♖d2 mate.

40...♗e6 Just in case, so that the bishop should not be trapped after g4.

41.g4 ♖xd6 42.♔f2 ♖c5 43.♖b2 ♔e7 44.♔g3 ♔d7 45.h4 ♔c7 46.h5 In this difficult position White lost on time.

On the last day the grandmasters did not take any risks and they found the shortest way to draw. It is probable that in this duel between the famous veterans the score was indeed not of decisive importance, but purely physically it was felt that the great competitors very much did not want to lose!

At the press conference after the match Spassky summed up:

'First of all I should like to congratulate everyone that there was no loss of life! We are no longer young. As for the creative outcome of the match, it is hard for me to draw a conclusion: such encounters usually provoke mistakes by both sides. I was pleased with the organization, although you can't get away from the fact that it was winter. I should like to thank Kirsan Nikolaevich: the apartment which was presented to me was in a very good condition.

'Since I gave up playing six years ago, it was hard for me to get into the swing of things, but then I sensed that Viktor Lvovich is a very good trainer! I have long been out of practice; I have lost touch with the openings, I work badly with a computer, and here, in general, I had problems. There were too many gaps to fill. But nevertheless I tried. From time to time a kind of liveliness appeared, which there hadn't been for a long time.

'It is always interesting for me to play against Viktor Lvovich. He is a creative player, he is not afraid of making a mistake, and he always fights bravely, especially in those positions which become difficult – then he is especially dangerous.'

And here is Kortchnoi's opinion:

'I honestly have to admit that for me this match was a riddle. Ten years ago I won 6-4, and here I was considered the favourite. Of course, during the past decade I have been playing worse. But Spassky was clearly better than then!'

Viktor Lvovich and Boris Vasilievich have once again demonstrated that chess helps to retain creative longevity and makes for a full life. The great grandmasters, who starred in the sixties and seventies of the last century, have cast a 'time-linking thread' from the golden age of chess to the present day.

Elista 2009

				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		TPR
Viktor Kortchnoi	IGM	SUI	2567	**1**	½	½	½	**0**	**1**	**0**	½	**4**	**2548**
Boris Spassky	IGM	FRA	2548	**0**	½	½	½	**1**	**0**	**1**	½	**4**	**2567**

ROWSON'S REVIEWS

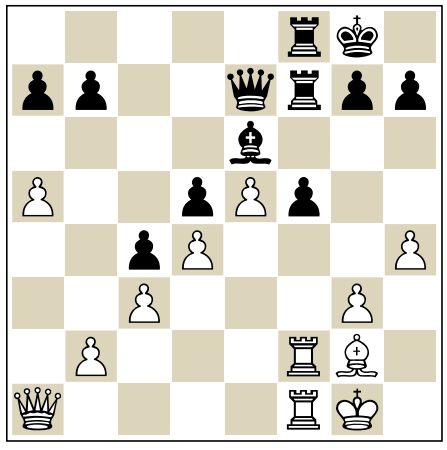
Chess Metaphors

About seven years ago, while enjoying some melting ice cream at the student accommodation in Harvard, a friend remarked that he particularly enjoyed ice cream in this semi-liquid, post-snowball, pre-milkshake state. I share the same preference, but I offer this memory now because I think my reaction may have been influenced by my experience of being a chess player. I immediately thought of myself as an eight year old, looking curiously at my mother's eighties-style perm, while returning from a trip to the swimming baths.

Not so typical, you might think, but what immediately entered my mind when I saw the melting ice cream was the idea of transitional states, and I offered a comparable example. Permed hair in the process of drying is neither completely straight nor completely curly, and I remember liking it that way. The content of the two instances is very different, but the form of the relationship is similar. So for me the pattern matched, and I expected my desert companions to see my point. Instead they looked at me like I was an alien life form, and swiftly polished off their ice cream. For them it wasn't the same thing at all.

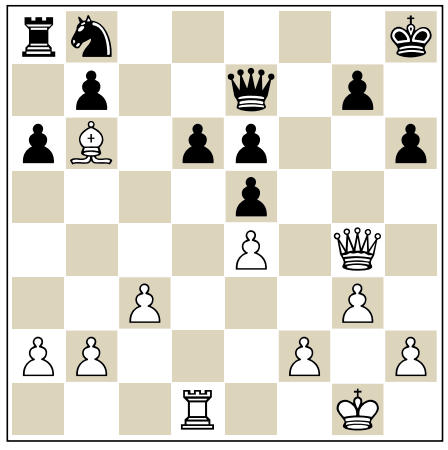
I hesitate to suggest that chess players have any privileged access to analogical reasoning or pattern matching, but if chess skill does transfer to other domains, one of the ways it might do so is in the manner in which we recognize patterns in everyday life. For instance I thought of chess when I read the following line by Steven Pinker, in *The Stuff of Thought*: 'The power of analogy doesn't come from noticing a mere similarity of parts (...) It comes from noticing relations among parts, even if the parts themselves are very different.'

I examine the following two positions in *The Seven Deadly Chess Sins* to illustrate how pattern recognition works, informed by Rozentalis, who said that his idea in the first example was informed by his awareness of Smyslov's in the second.



Rozentalis-Appel
Germany Bundesliga 1993/94
position after 28...♕e7

29.♕a3!



Smyslov-Reshevsky
World Championship Tournament 1948
position after 25...fxe6

26.♕h4!

The positions have very different pawn structures, and have arisen from different openings. Moreover, in one case (♕a3) White is merely applying some positional pressure, while in the other a queen exchange is effectively forced (on h4, or on d8 after ♕d7 ♕d8+), leading to the immediate loss of the d6 pawn. You could add that while ♕a3 was largely about trying to open the b-file, ♕h4 had nothing to do with opening the g-file. However, what makes an emotional and cognitive imprint is that in both cases White allows his pawn structure to be seriously compromised in return for breaking through to the opponent's position, and this is the salient pattern that allows one position to be understood in terms of the other.

The patterns are comparable because understanding chess positions is about understanding the relationships between pieces relative to certain goals that each side is trying to achieve. Stronger players home in on the *relationships that are relevant to the goals that are most important* (e.g. rela-

tive influence of queens with respect to vulnerable pawns), while weaker players are often burdened by seeing too many relationships and struggle to grasp the relative importance of the goals (e.g. preserving the integrity of the pawn structure trumping the need to exchange queens), which means they find it harder to decide upon good moves.

Again Pinker highlights why the idea of powerful analogies pertains to chess: 'For an analogy to be scientifically useful (...) the correspondences can't apply to a part of one thing that merely resembles the part of the other. They have to apply to the relationships between the parts, and even better, to the relationships between the relationships, and to the relationships between the relationships between the relationships between the relationships.'

Scientific utility does not map perfectly onto chess utility, but the point is that chess strength is marked by a strong grasp of *relevant* analogies, and an intuitive awareness of how different relationships on the board relate to each other. Rozentalis, like any grandmaster, will have imbibed thousands of games where players lose because of compromised pawn structures, but the analogy that was relevant to 'the relationship between the parts' in that particular position was the one where White prevailed despite voluntarily weakening his pawn structure.

What remains unclear is the extent to which this patterning ability, this tendency to recognize relevant and important analogies, is a feature of expertise in general, or chess expertise in particular; and insofar as it is a feature of chess expertise, how much of that expertise transfers to life in general. After all, the ability to see drying hair where others see melting ice cream is not self-evidently useful.

However, there is some cause to think that chess expertise might be particularly applicable to recognizing real-life patterns, breaking codes, detecting analogies etc., which is that the game itself is often used as a metaphor for the human mind. In other words, you could argue that to understand the nature of chess skill well is also to understand the mind well.

A recent book, ***Chess Metaphors: Artificial Intelligence and The Human Mind***, by Diego Rasskin Gutman, develops this idea in a rigorous and elegant way. The author explains his project as follows: '... The core idea of this book can be encapsulated as follows: I use chess to delve into an analysis of the cognitive properties of the brain. As it explores concept after concept, move after move, the book delves into the varied mental mechanisms and the respective cognitive processes underlying the action of playing a board game such as chess.'

It was incumbent on me to understand the book because I was asked to moderate a discussion about chess metaphors between the author, Diego, and a CEO of a major American company Pega Systems, Alan Trefler, who attributes the success of his business systems to his use of chess metaphors. I believe the discussion went quite well, and it will soon be available to view online, but it was not easy to make sense of the links between artificial intelligence, chess and business in an accessible and meaningful way.

Alan's claim seemed to be that business can learn from chess how to adapt business systems to navigate a seemingly infinite search space, for instance how to set a price in a global marketplace, through the use of certain flexible guidelines or heuristics, rather than relying on a single algorithm and statistical brute force. He seemed to suggest that the most effective guidelines are built on metaphors pertaining to pattern recognition, and many of these metaphors are derived from chess. For instance, in a recent television interview he said that the main problem in chess and in business is falling in love with your own strategy. By implication, chess and business expertise require heuristics that are adaptable rather than fixed and rule-bound.

For me, Diego's most interesting claim was that chess is a meta-metaphor, in the sense that it provides the basis for so many other metaphors. Chess is not merely a simple metaphor in the sense that people can be portrayed as 'pawns on a chessboard', prone to 'political stalemates' etc. Diego's point is deeper, namely that chess is a root metaphor for the mind. 'What could be more human,' he asks, 'than a state of permanent doubt when facing the thoughts and actions of our fellow beings?'

It is difficult to know how best to share my enjoyment of this book with the reader, other than to recommend it very strongly. Those seeking quick tips on how to increase their rating should look elsewhere, but anybody who wants a deep and sympathetic appraisal of how chess informs our understanding of human and artificial intelligence will be richly rewarded by *Chess Metaphors*.

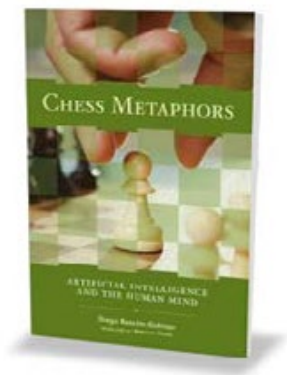
The author is a theoretical biologist at Valencia University and a competent chess player. What I liked most about the book was that Diego grasps and conveys not just the cognitive significance of chess for understanding artificial intelligence, but also the human rewards, manifest in the emotional and aesthetic rewards of the game.

His main concern is the interface of chess and artificial intelligence, but his love for chess as a game to be enjoyed also shines through. The book includes lucid introductory chapters on the nature of the brain, the mind, and artificial intelligence, before analysing the relationship between chess and problem solving, and then the nature of chess computer programs, in particular the manner in which they search positions using evaluation functions.

Although I enjoyed the book, liked the author, and was glad to take part in the discussion, I don't feel I have the expertise in artificial intelligence or chess programming to comment on the more technical claims in the book. However, for the sake of balance I should point out that I spoke with an International Master at the London Chess Classic who is very much a chess computer expert, who had some major reservations about the technical claims in the book. One place where I shared his concern was page 152, where Diego refers to an experiment based on large scale computer simulations and concludes: 'In a game of fifty moves, an extra move advantage for one side is equivalent to a minor piece and creates an advantage that leads to victory in 75 per cent of cases.' I don't really know exactly what is meant here. If the claim refers to the value of tempi across positions it sounds too high, and if it refers to the possibility of moving twice in a row whenever you like, it is not clear why it is relevant.

Still, this lack of clarity is one of very few exceptions in an otherwise compelling read. For instance I was impressed by the idea that 'The evaluation function is to the chess program what the knowledge to recognize a real-life fact is to the human mind.' Moreover, I imagine the vast majority of New In Chess readers will enjoy the book without having to engage in the more technical arguments relating to artificial intelligence. For instance, I very much appreciated the author's account of chess genesis and chronology in Chapter 4, and it reminded me not to lose sight of chess as a product of cultural history. As Malcolm Pein recently put it to me: 'Games consoles come and go, but chess has been with us for about 15,000 years and is here to stay.' Diego develops this point as follows:

'Chess is a game – that is, an activity to pass some free time... The history of the development of ludic activities in some ways is the



Chess Metaphors
Diego Rasskin-Gutman

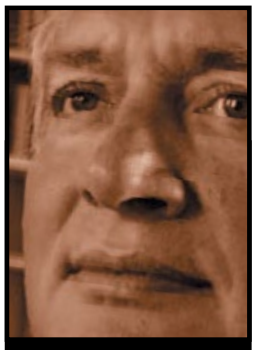
history of civilization. When men and women have daily interactions and common spaces are generated, activities are needed to strengthen relations among people. Actions that are vital for relating to the world also need to be practiced so that when the moment arrives to carry them out with all the consequences of real life, we are familiar with them and react appropriately. This fascinating aspect of games generally and of chess in particular falls under the umbrella of theories of the mind. This field postulates that human consciousness evolved from a social reality in which each individual must respond to his or her own desires and the expectations of others.'

When you consider the historical development of chess from south and east Asia, through Persia and then throughout Europe and the Americas, you see that chess is part of our universal cultural history. It is easy (and probably best) to forget this when you are thinking of your next move, but important to remember when making the case for chess as a social good.

Diego elaborates on the mental processes necessary to play chess, including perception, long term memory, working memory, concentration, search strategies and the psychological dimension, and these cognitive features are given a suitably rhetorical flourish by the famed French psychologist Alfred Binet: 'If we could look inside the head of a player, we should see there a whole world of feelings, images, ideas, emotions, and passions, an ever-changing panorama of consciousness states.'

Diego elaborates on this idea in several places, but the most powerful expression of how and why chess fits into the broader scheme of human existence is captured in the following exquisite line in the epilogue, which reflects the book's ambition and scope:

'The known and the strange, the feared and the adored, the respected and the disdained – all begin and end with how we represent the world and how we use that vision. The complexities of the universe are reflected in the complexities of our brains and in that natural, intimate and solitary activity we call mind. In this process of matching up and representing, the inexhaustible human curiosity accepts the ancestral challenge of exploring the enormity of what we have yet to know. Chess, a world of fixed rules but with almost infinite borders, is an approachable model of that profound and endless human search.'



JAN TIMMAN

Old hands and young talents

The Marianske Lazne chess tradition goes back to 1925, when a big tournament was organized there that was won by Rubinstein and Nimzowitsch. After this tournament the tradition was interrupted for years until after World War II.

In 1948, a tournament was organized that was played partly in Karlsbad and partly in Marianske Lazne, and in 2008 a Czech organizer revived the tradition by organizing the *Old Hands vs Snowdrops* tournament, in which four female top players enter the lists against four older, well-known grandmasters. I am not so sure that this is a particularly attractive formula, but it certainly has one big advantage: all eight players are motivated to play for a win – the women out of pure ambition, the older men because they are eager to prove that they can still do it...

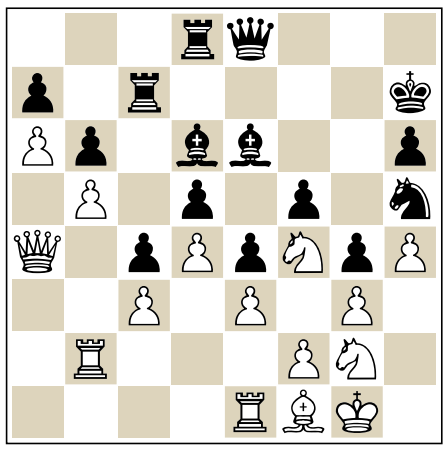
The 2008 tournament was notable mainly for the fact that Karpov was combined off the board by Jackova, while the 2009 edition will be remembered because Kortchnoi overstepped the time-limit twice in positions in which he had nothing to complain about (see diagram). The position is a complete deadlock in which neither player can do anything. Muzychuk had offered a draw a few moves earlier, but Kortchnoi hadn't heard her. Remarkably enough, we got 30-second increments, so there was no real time-trouble.

Later in the tournament, Kortchnoi came to Muzychuk just before the start of the round, when she was ready to start her game against Hort, and gave her a long speech in Russian. From what I heard afterwards, I understand that he was saying that Muzychuk should have offered a draw with gestures, not with words. The young women was unruffled and when Kortchnoi was finished, she immediately started her game.

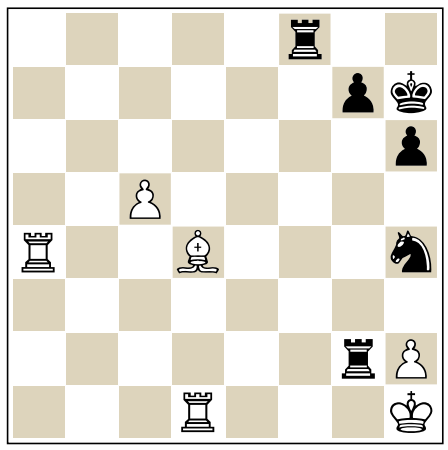
You'd think that the end of his game against Muzychuk would have been a warning to the old warhorse, but in the next round the same thing happened again (see diagram). Koneru had been in slight time-trouble and got up after her 40th move. Kortchnoi had about nine minutes left. The position is equal, and after the obvious 40...♖c2 a quick draw would probably have followed. But Kortchnoi sank into deep thought. I watched him from the audience, and grew increasingly worried. Eventually, Black exceeded his time-limit, but Kortchnoi did not accept this in good grace. First he vented his spleen on the arbiter, and then he had a go at his opponent. He reproached Koneru for not having offered a draw, which was rather strange: when was she supposed to have done so? Certainly not after Kortchnoi had overstepped the time. Then he said loudly: 'I will not shake your hand', and left the tournament hall, leaving a bewildered Koneru behind.

Kortchnoi has got into the habit of expressing himself quite sharply against all players he doesn't greatly respect, particularly so when he is talking to women. During the prize-giving ceremony he said to Lahno: 'Eight years ago you were a promising player, but what has happened since?'

Lahno, who was heavily pregnant, shrugged off his words as easily as Muzychuk had done before, but I had the impression that Koneru took them much more to heart. She was in excellent form in Marianske Lazne, and before the



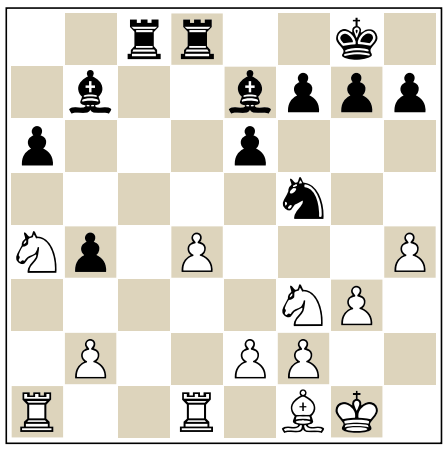
Kortchnoi-Muzychuk
final position, after 29...♕e8



Koneru-Kortchnoi
final position, after 40.♔h1

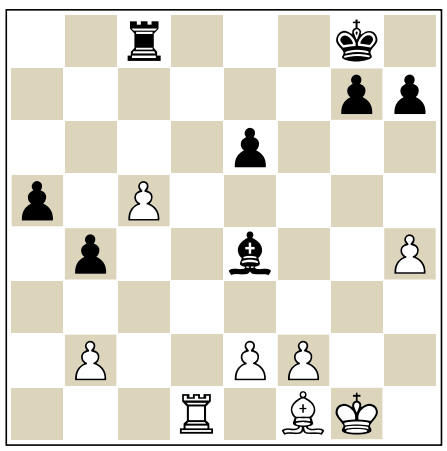
start of the last round she was on 5½ out of 7, which was the main reason why the Snowdrops were leading by two points at that time.

In the last round, she played her second game against Kortchnoi. Initially, things seemed to go Koneru's way. After a Catalan that had been misplayed by White she had the following promising position:

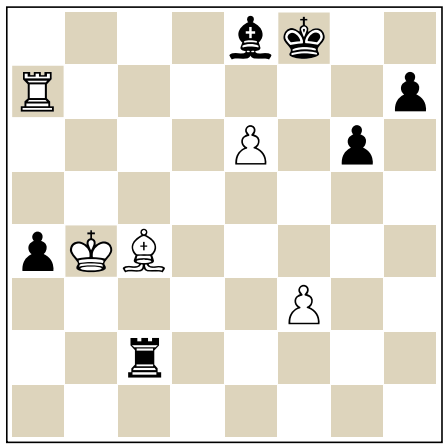


Kortchnoi-Koneru
position after 24...♘xf5

Kortchnoi now immediately played
25.g4
This advance fails to solve White's problems.
25...♗xf3 26.gxf5 ♗e4
Stronger was 26...♗h5, with a clear advantage for Black. After the text Black is only slightly better.
27.fxe6 fxe6 28.♘c5 ♗xc5 29.dxc5 ♖xd1 30.♖xd1 a5



Koneru clearly wants to win this game. The position is roughly equal now.
31.♖c1 ♔f7 32.f3 ♗c6 33.e4 a4 34.♔f2 ♖a8 35.♔e3 ♔e7 36.♗c4 ♖a5 37.♔d4 e5+ 38.♔xe5 ♖xc5+ 39.♔d4 ♖h5 40.♖g1 g6 41.♖g5 ♖xh4 42.♖a5 ♗e8 43.♖a7+ ♔f6 44.♖a8 ♔e7 45.♖a7+ ♔f6 46.♔c5 ♖h2 47.♖a8 ♔e7 48.e5 ♖xb2 49.♖a7+ ♔f8 50.e6 ♖c2 51.♔xb4



51...♗c6?
Panic. Black wants to keep the white rook away from a8, but this is not at all necessary, as 51...h5 52.e7+ ♔g7 53.♖a8 is followed by 53...♖xc4+ 54.♔xc4 ♔f7, with a comfortable draw.
52.♖xh7
Now White is winning. The rest was a matter of technique for which Kortchnoi could be trusted. This unexpected victory gave the Old Hands a ray of hope. We were now trailing by just one point, and Hort and I were still playing. Unfortunately, neither of us managed to win.

I was the youngest Old Hand in Marianske Lazne, my three team mates being on the other side of 60. Two weeks later, when I travelled to the yearly festival in Groningen, I played a more familiar part again: I was the oldest participant.

Not long ago, Kortchnoi said in an interview that the reason he was still so active was that he wanted to measure up to the new generation. This was his main motive; he had stopped thinking about the world championship.

I can feel this time approaching for me as well. It is interesting to cross swords with the computer generation. An inevitable phenomenon when you do this is that your opponents are getting ever younger. In Reykjavik 2004 I played against Magnus Carlsen and won, making me the only Dutch chess player with a plus score against him. Two years later I played against the 15-year-old Helgi Dam Ziska, also in Reykjavik, a game that became known mainly because I resigned in a winning position. Earlier this year, I made a draw against Anish Giri in Dieren, Holland.

But those were incidental games. In June last year I was approached by the organizers of the annual festival in Groningen to play a four-game match against 15-year-old Robin van Kampen. Like me, he had become Dutch junior champion at the age of 14 (in the under-20 category, something you didn't need to say then, because there *was* only one category). I eagerly accepted the invitation, thinking that this would be an interesting generation clash.

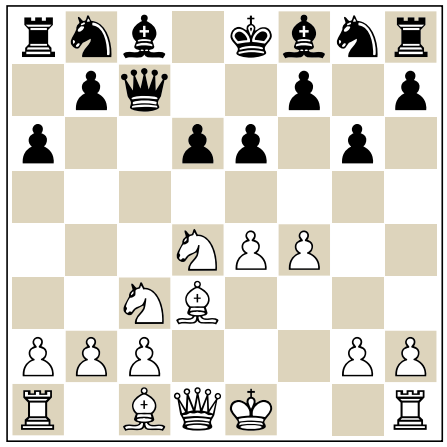
During my preparation I realized that this was not going to be an easy match. Van Kampen had gained more than 100 rating points in the previous year, without having played much, which means that he had been playing at a far higher level than his current 2470 rating. I played well in the first game, but lost the second one by over-estimating my chances. After failing to get an advantage in the third game I was pretty motivated to win the last one. I decided to go for a fairly unknown variation of the Sicilian.

SI 41.13 – B43
Robin van Kampen
Jan Timman
Groningen 2009 (4)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6 5.♘c3 ♕c7 6.♗d3 g6
This move has been played more than 40 times, but with hindsight

I have to conclude that it leads to a very poor version of the Dragon variation.

7.f4 d6



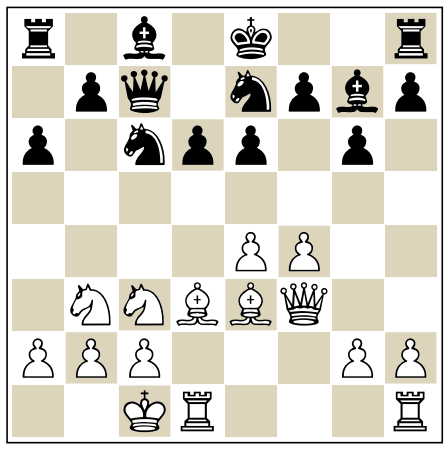
8.♕f3

A new move. White's plan is simple and strong: he wants to develop his bishop to e3 and then castle queenside.

8...♗g7 9.♗e3 ♘c6 10.♘b3

Another strong move. After 10.♘xc6 ♕xc6 Black would have found it easier to get counterplay.

10...♘ge7 11.0-0-0



11...0-0

Castling against the storm turns out to be too dangerous. I was determined to take sharp action, but my attempt will be refuted by a long-term queen sacrifice.

White could have met 11...f5 very strongly with 12.exf5 ♘xf5 13.♗xf5 gxf5 14.♕h5+.

Black's best bet would probably have been 11...b5, since he needn't fear the consequences of 12.♗xb5 0-0. But White will continue with 12.g4, after which Black won't have an easy task. I was facing a general problem here that occurs quite frequently: you opt for a dubious line as Black in order to play for a win, leading to a position you would love to have had as White.

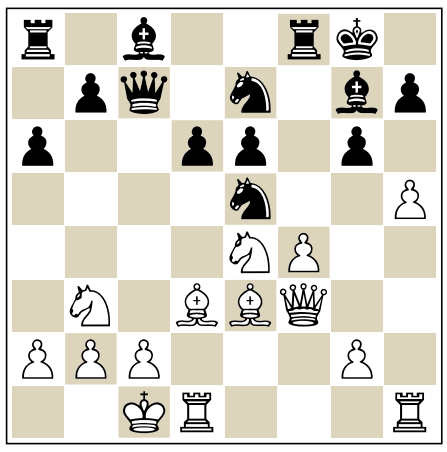
NEW IN CHESS

Jan Timman vs. Robin van Kampen, who in the past year has been 'playing at a far higher level than his current 2470 rating'.

12.h4

The best move to start the attack. After 12.g4 f5 Black would have had sufficient counterplay.

12...f5 13.h5 fxe4 14.♘xe4 ♘e5



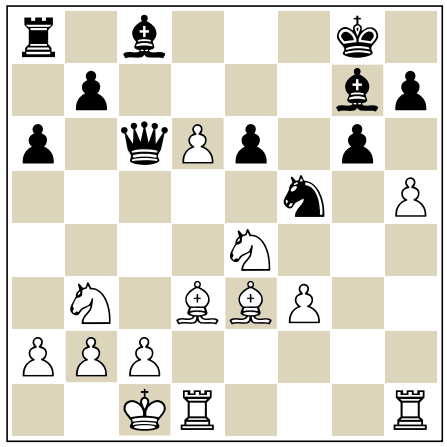
In my calculations I had pinned my hopes on this knight move. After 15.♕h3 ♘xd3+ 16.♖xd3 d5 17.hxg6 h6 18.♘ec5 e5 the fight would grow very sharp, but I had already seen that White had a far better move.

15.fxe5! A very strong queen sacrifice. **15...♖xf3 16.exd6 ♕c6**

With 16...♕xd6 Black could return the queen, but after 17.♘xd6 ♖xe3 18.hxg6 hxg6 19.♖de1 he would be with his back against the wall.

17.gxf3 ♘f5

The only good thing in Black's position: his knight is well placed.



18.♗d2

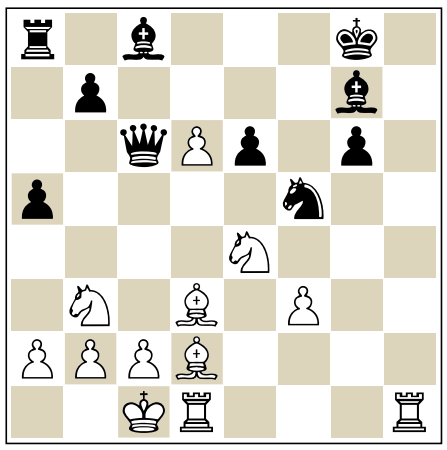
White had a lot of good bishop moves. The computer has a slight preference for 18.♗f4 and 18.♗f2, after which it assesses the white advantage as winning. The text is logical, too: White is preparing to take the bishop to the long diagonal and swap the black fianchettoed bishop, one of the lynchpins of Black's defence. The main reasons for White's advantage are the

advanced passed pawn, the good coordination of his pieces and his attacking chances after the inevitable opening of the h-file.

18...a5

Objectively speaking, 18...♗d7 would have been the best defence, intending to cover the g-pawn from e8 later. But for practical reasons I decided to go for a counter-attack as quickly as possible.

19.hxg6 hxg6



20.a4

Now I could heave a sigh of relief. 20.♖dg1 would have been very strong, as 20...a4 can then be strongly met by 21.♘a5!, and Black has insufficient counterplay. After the text the battle is entirely open again.

Incidentally, Van Kampen's mistake here is interesting from a psychological point of view. Decades ago, Tal once said about Andersson: 'Ulf acts excellently and extremely coolheadedly in situations in which his king is under enemy fire, but sometimes the shadow of an attack, or rather the illusion of one, causes him to become confused'.

The same thing seemed to be happening to my young opponent.

20...♕xa4 21.♘ec5 Here 21.♖dg1 was still the best move. Now the position is dynamically balanced.

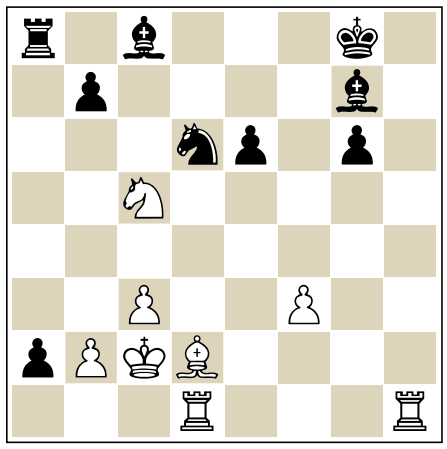
21...♕a2

The sharpest move. Black returns the queen in order to change the character of the position. He could also have withdrawn it without adverse effects.

22.c3 a4 23.♗b1 axb3

It does not happen very often that both players sacrifice a queen in such quick succession.

24.♗xa2 bxa2 25.♔c2 ♘xd6



A completely new situation has arisen. White is an exchange up, but he will have to deal with the annoying black passed pawn first.

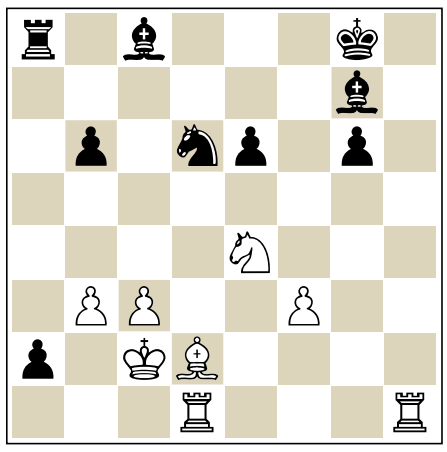
26.b3

White vacates square b2 for the king in order to eliminate the a-pawn as quickly as possible.

26.♗e3 would have been slightly more accurate, as this would have forced Black to put his knight in a passive position with 26...♘f7.

26...b6 27.♘e4

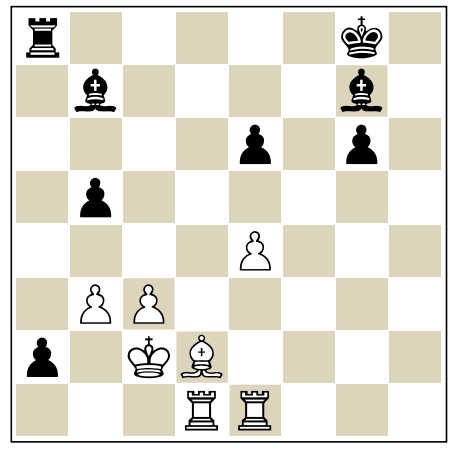
Centralization. After 27.♘a4 ♗b7 Black would be better.



27...♘xe4

The obvious choice was to swap the centralized white knight, yet Black had a better way to approach this position, viz. 27...♗b7 28.♖he1 ♘b5!, giving the black queen's bishop access to square d5. After 29.♔b2 ♗d5 30.♖a1 ♖d8! 31.♗g5 ♖f8 32.♗d2 neither player can avoid move repetition without ending up with a worse position.

28.fxe4 ♗b7 29.♖he1 b5



30.♔b2

This was exactly what I had hoped for. White goes for the a-pawn as quickly as possible, but in doing so he allows the black bishop pair to realize its full potential. Far stronger would have been 30. b4! in order to keep the position as closed as possible, after which Black has no better than 30... ♗xe4+ 31.♖xe4 a1♕ 32.♖xa1 ♖xa1 33.♖xe6. Now he has to be careful: only with 33...♖h1! 34. ♖xg6 ♖h5 will Black be able to hold the endgame. White still has practical chances, but objectively speaking it should be a draw.

30...b4 31.e5

Closing the king's bishop's diagonal; but now the other bishop grows strong.

31...♖d8 The 32...♗f3 threat means White has no time to take the a-pawn. **32.♗g5**

White is aiming for a rook swap, a good practical decision, because he had little time left.

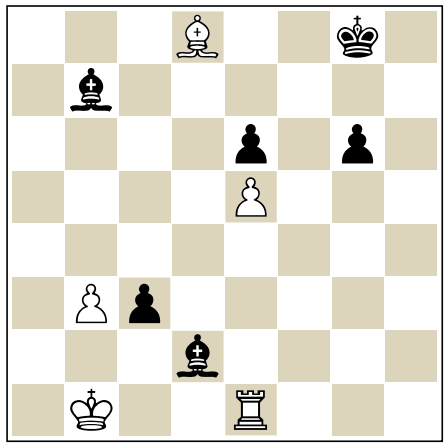
32...bxc3+ 33.♔xa2 ♖c8 34. ♖d8+ ♖xd8 35.♗xd8 ♗h6

White has to be careful, despite the reduced material. The passed c-pawn may become dangerous.

36.♔b1

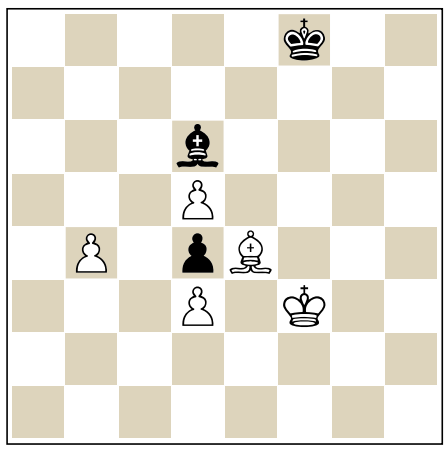
Not exactly wrong, but 36.♗e7, intending to take the bishop to a3, would have been safer, as this would give him control of the promotion square of the enemy c-pawn.

36...♗d2



37.♖e2?
A blunder. Both 37.♖g1 and 37.♗h4 would have given White a draw.
In the latter case, incidentally, White should continue to play carefully. Only 38.♖g1 is enough to meet 37...g5. After 38.♗g3? ♗xe1 39.♗xe1 ♗e4+ 40.♔c1 c2 Black would have a winning endgame, e.g. 41.b4 ♔g7 42.b5 ♔g6 43.b6 ♔f5 44.b7 ♗xb7 45.♔xc2 ♔e4!, and the white king is kept away, after which the g-pawn decides. The white e-pawn reduces the white bishop's elbow room. An instructive endgame.
37...♗f3
Suddenly the black bishop pair reigns supreme. White has to give a rook to stop the pawn from queening.
38.♖h2 Desperation.
38...♗e4+ 39.♔a2 c2 40.♗f6 c1♕
White resigned.

Based on this endgame, I composed a modest endgame study:



Timman 2010
White to play and win

NEW IN CHESS

Thirteen-year-old Ukrainian prodigy Ilya Nyzhnyk won the Open in Groningen with remarkably mature play.

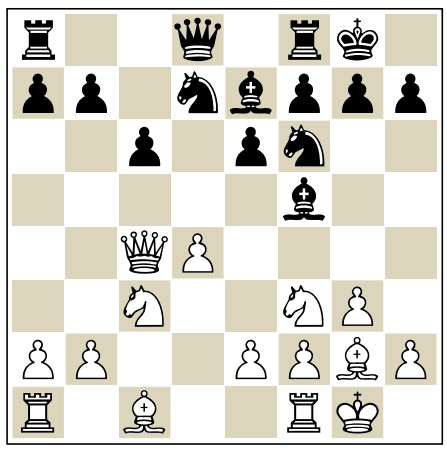
The first move is clear: **1.b5 ♗c7**
Stopping the advance of the b-pawn.
After 1...♔e7 2.b6 ♔d8 3.♗f5! ♗c5 4.b7 ♔c7 5.♗c8 ♗a7 6.♔f4! ♔d6 7.♔e4 White would win through zugzwang.
2.d6! An important pawn sacrifice!
2...♗xd6 3.♗f5! Opening the way for the king to go to c6. **3...♔e7 4.♔e4 ♔d8 5.♔d5** And wins, because 5...♔c7 fails to 6.b6+.

The open tournament was won by 13-year-old Ilya Nyzhnyk with the fine score of 7½ out of 9. In my report of the European championship in Budva I already gave a fragment from a game of his. He beat Pashikian with a simple manoeuvre (see New In Chess 2009/3).

In Groningen, Nyzhnyk's play seemed remarkably mature. There were few enough spectacular turns, but he showed himself to be excellent in gathering a material advantage and converting it. A good example is his win over Chadaev from Round 7.

SL 1.4 – D23
Ilya Nyzhnyk
Nikolay Chadaev
Groningen 2009 (7)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♕c2
This is Nyzhnyk's preferred move.
4...dxc4 5.♕xc4 ♗f5 6.g3 e6 7.♗g2 ♘bd7 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♘c3 0-0

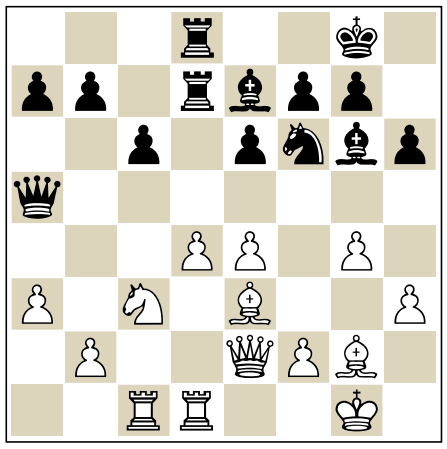


10.e3

This pawn move is supposed to be harmless, but Nyzhnyk is aiming for a clear-cut and purely positional battle.

In the final round he deviated against Deviatkin with 10.♕b3 ♕b6 11.♘d2. He went on to win this game as well, although a draw would have sufficed for a clear victory.

10...h6 11.♕e2 ♘e4 12.♘d2 ♘xd2 13.♗xd2 ♗g6 14.e4 ♖c8 15.♗e3 ♕a5 16.♖fd1 ♘f6 17.a3 ♖fd8 18.h3 ♖d7 19.♖ac1 ♖cd8 20.g4

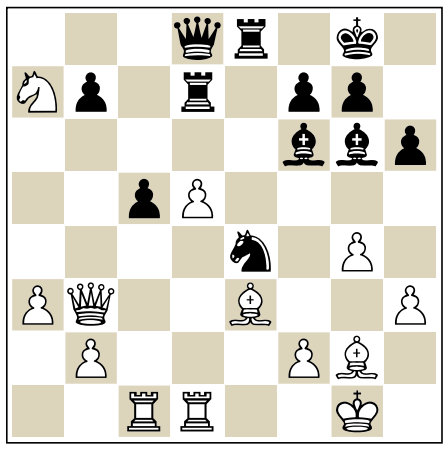


Classical play. With this pawn push White wants to gain space on the kingside.

20...c5 21.d5 exd5 22.exd5 ♖e8 23.♘b5 ♕d8 24.♘xa7

White has won a pawn, but Black gets active piece play in return.

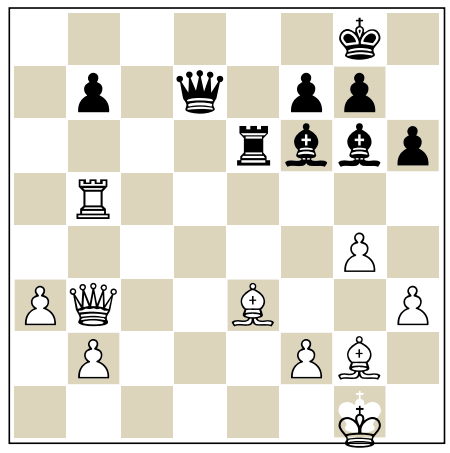
24...♘e4 25.♕c4 ♗f6 26.♕b3



26...♖e5

The wrong plan. Correct was 26... ♗h4, which maintains the balance.

27.d6 ♖e6 28.♘b5 ♘xd6 29.♖xc5 ♘xb5 30.♖xd7 ♕xd7 31.♖xb5



White has retained his extra pawn, and Black must now sacrifice an exchange with 31...♖xe3.

After missing this chance he gets bulldozed off the board in the remaining moves.

31...♖d6 32.♖d5 ♖xd5 33.♕xd5 ♕a4 34.♕xb7 ♕d1+ 35.♔h2 ♕d6+ 36.f4 ♗d4 37.♕c8+ ♔h7 38.♕c1 ♗xe3 39.♕xe3 f5 40.b4 ♕a6 41.♔g3 ♕c4 42.♗f3 ♕a6 43.♗e2 ♕b7 44.b5 fxg4 45.hxg4 ♗e4 46.a4 ♗h1 47.♗f1

And in this hopeless position Black resigned.

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NAME: **Ben Finegold**

ELO-RATING: **2531**

DATE OF BIRTH: **September 6, 1969**

PLACE OF BIRTH: **Detroit, Michigan, USA**

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: **St. Louis, Missouri, USA**

BETSY DYNAKO

What is your favourite colour?
Black.

What kind of food makes you happy?
Vegetarian food.

And what drink?
Unsweetened iced tea.

Who is your favourite author?
Mikhail Tal.

What was the best or most interesting book you ever read?
Spilled Gravy by Ed Driscoll.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
Pulp Fiction.

What is your favourite TV series?
The Simpsons.

Do you have a favourite actor?
Clive Owen.

And a favourite actress?
Penelope Cruz.

Do you have a favourite painter or artist?
Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn.

Who are the three greatest chess players of all time?
Morphy, Fischer, Kasparov.

What do you see as your best result ever?
2002 World Open, 7-2, =1st.

What was the best game you ever played?
Finegold-Gelfand, Amsterdam 1989.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time and why?
Paul Morphy. He dominated and played in a clear, accurate style. Way ahead of his time.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
San Antonio 1972. I was 8 or 9 when I read it and it had annotated games by the players (Karpov, Larsen, Mecking, Keres…) and photos and bios.

What was the most exciting chess game you ever saw?
Three days ago, Gashimov-Grischuk, World Team Championship 2010!

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
Trash talking.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
Yes, they blunder too often.

Do you have any superstitions concerning chess?
No, superstition is bad luck.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
A butterfly, nobody ever suspects the butterfly.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
Anand, Kramnik, and Carlsen.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
How to change a tire.

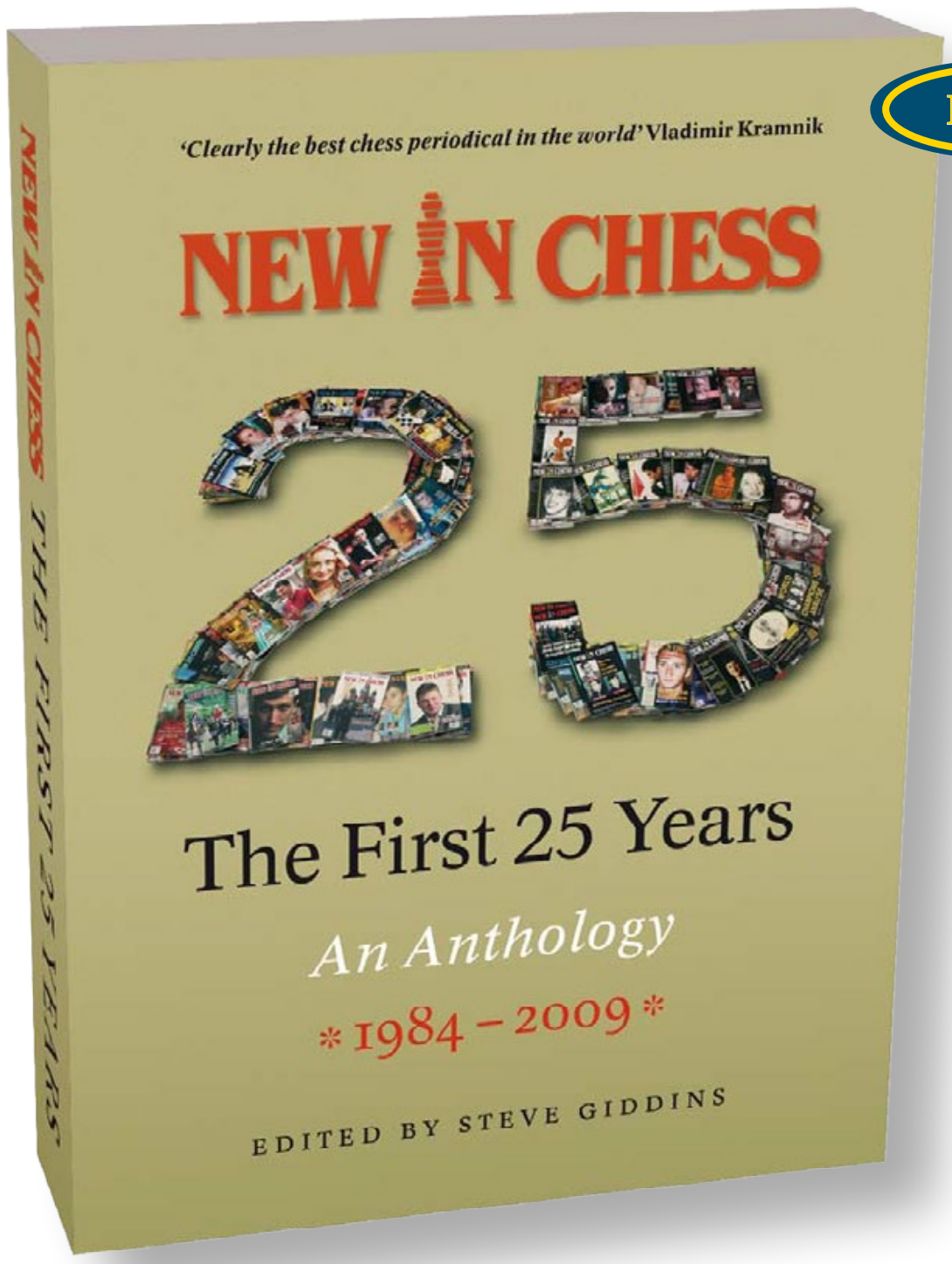
What is your greatest fear?
Playing Black in a Najdorf Sicilian.

What will be the nationality of the 2050 chess world champion?
Martian.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
Yes, but perhaps not in forming a cogent sentence.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
Chess Players Mate better!

We proudly present: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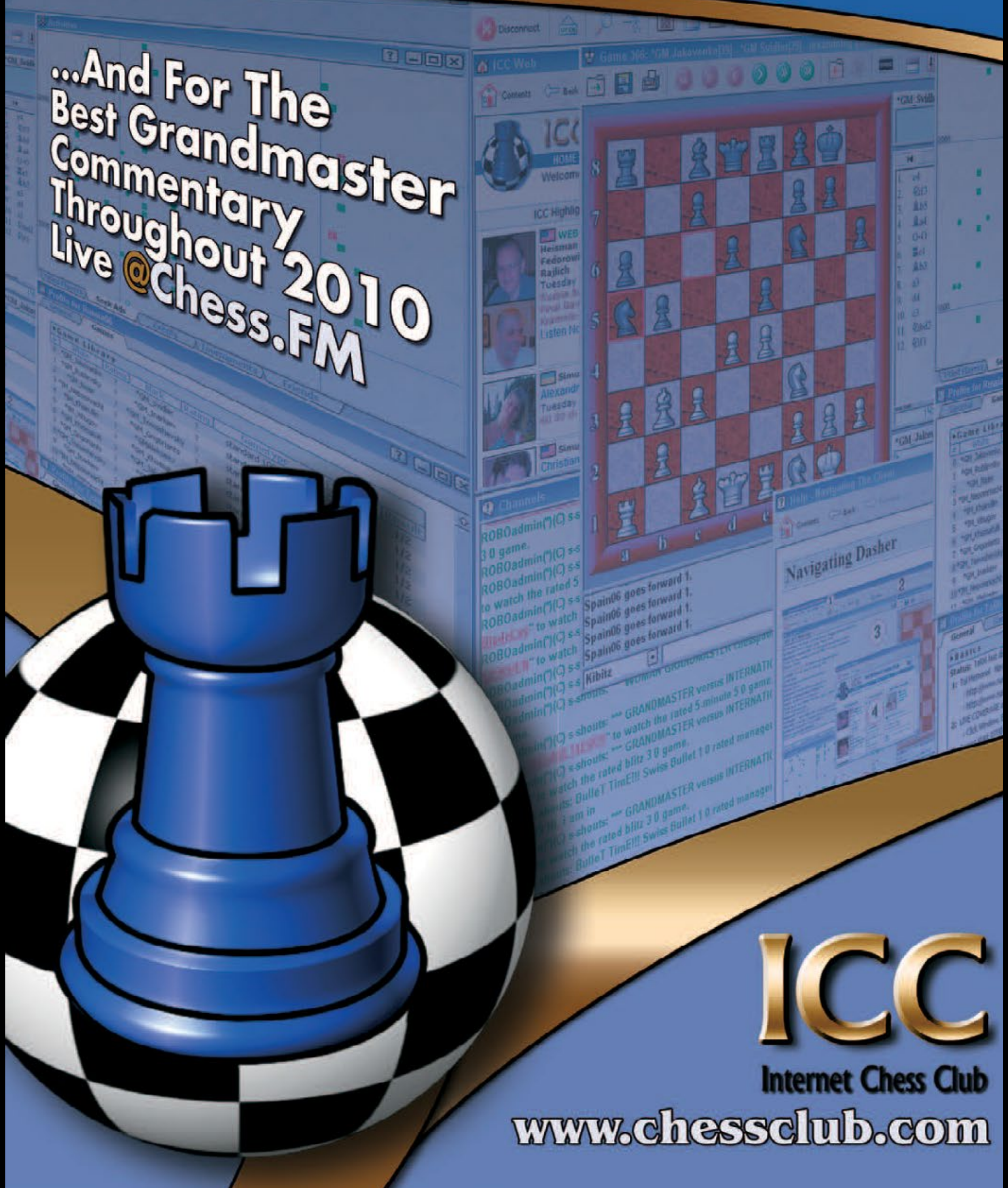

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